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SELECTIONS FROM  
THE WRITINGS OF  
PONSONBY OGLE



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FROM THE WRITINGS OF  
Ponsonby Ogle  
"

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## IN MEMORIAM

"We die—does it matter when?"

—TENNYSON.

FOR anyone who knew the writer of the fugitive pieces brought together in this little book, the first feeling, on reading it, will, I think, be one of disappointment. There are men whose individuality shines through their literary work as lamplight through a globe of clear glass: there are others of whom that is not in the least true. And of the latter class Pensonby Ogle was emphatically one. To say of him "*Le style c'est l'homme*" would be utterly misleading. The style, in his case, is in no sense the measure of the man. Brilliant though everything was that came from his facile pen—for he could no more be dull on paper than in person—nothing that he wrote could ever convey, to those who knew him not, an adequate sense of the peculiar charm of his personality. And to those who knew and loved him the written word must needs seem but a slight and utterly shortcoming memorial. Nevertheless, it is well that something should be put together and printed, in order that those who were his friends may be able to catch even the faintest echo of his footstep on the stage of life, to

recall his gay and gallant bearing, his keen, yet kindly wit, his whimsical humor, his unfailing loyalty to old associates and old associations.

Had the man whose natural gifts are so imperfectly expressed in this book chosen to devote himself to a career in any one of the liberal professions, he could not have failed to attain a position of high distinction. But his nature would not have it so. An inexhaustible curiosity to study the passing show (derived, perhaps, from his American blood on the mother's side); an instinctive shrinking from the boredom of a life of routine, and a spice of the Bohemian in his composition, led him to prefer a life of freedom, which the alertness of his mind never allowed to degenerate into intellectual idleness, but which brought no distinction, as the world understands the term. He deliberately chose to explore the byways of life rather than to plod the beaten track; of the average man's ambition he had none—but, then, he was not the average man: those who, like myself, were his comrades at Winchester, at Oxford, and on the "Globe," know well that he was something much more than that. He has gone from us, all too soon; but his memory will ever be kept green and fresh in the hearts of those for whom—and for whom alone—the following slight memorial of him is intended.

E. G. B.

# PONSONBY OGLE

## AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I WAS born of respectable parentage in the year 1855, but at the time my birth attracted no particular attention.

Very early in my career, however, I became the object of various complimentary remarks—some almost fulsome in quality—as to my beauty, intelligence and resemblance to one or both of my excellent parents. My head at this period of my life was not so easily turned as my stomach, and for many months I resisted the temptation to set up in life as a genius; but finally I succumbed under the influence of extraordinary temptation.

My nurse, a worthy person of a crooning disposition, was accustomed to soothe me (as she fancied) by breathing warm nursery rhymes over my face about bed-time. To one of my sensitive nature the rhyme and rhythm of those compositions were inexpressibly irritating, and I screamed aloud. The protest was probably misunderstood—at least it was ineffectual: I was promptly dandled face downwards

and the offensive lines were chanted again to the back of my swaddling clothes. I became silent and thought only of revenge. As soon, I vowed to myself, as they teach me to read and write, I will myself become a poet. Within the few succeeding years, I fulfilled my vow. I became a poet, and the writing of poetry led me, by natural consequence, to the writing of prose. It has been so with many of our best writers from Shakespeare to Martin Tupper, and the prose is often as unconscious as the prose of Monsieur Jourdain himself.

I am still alive and in my thirty-ninth year, but the habit is beyond all hope of cure. I have lost parents, friends, relatives, money, hair and teeth. But I still write—verse and prose: it is a matter of D. V.

It has been suggested to me that a collection of some of my most wanton performances would be a salutary warning to others; and I comply very willingly with the suggestion in the following pages. For the benefit of the uninitiated I would merely explain that the compositions in which each line begins with a capital letter are the poems.

*May 5, 1894.*

"The Globe," January 9, 1888

## SCENERY

(BY A RETIRED EDITOR)

I HAVE always abhorred the country—to live in. I love Fleet Street not less than Dr. Johnson; I miss a lemon as much as Sidney Smith. There are forty reasons why I breathe freely and joyously in a town, and forty other reasons for my mental asphyxiation in the country. Depend upon it, the man who first invented that ridiculous fable about the town and the country mouse was some poor devil of a Western country squire, who wanted to persuade his daughters that the Exeter shops were finer, and the Exeter gaities more thrilling, than the vanities of London town. By which he saved both the expense of posting annually 200 miles, and kept his family from mutiny.

Not but that I love the country. I love it as I love a distant cousin, who has me down in his will. I like it best removed. *De rebus remotis nil nisi bonum.* To the country I vaguely give the credit of milk and vegetables, of beef and poultry, of flowers and fruit—all excellent things; but for me they are grown in Covent Garden, or bred in Leadenhall and Smithfield, places frequently referred to as authorities by

my local tradesmen. I have never made any exact inquiry as to whence these things come up to the great central markets. They come from the country, probably—I am not quite sure about the milk. The country has its cabbages doubtless, as the sea has its pearls, and the heaven has its stars; but I have no more desire to see a cabbage garden than I have to join the pearl fishing fleets, or to go up in a balloon. Other products of the country, human ones, I see from time to time; but they do not attract me either by their exceedingly healthy appearance or by their insatiable curiosity about what is the best thing to see at the theatres. And Bœtia may have a clearer sky than Athens-upon-Thames; but the intellectual atmosphere here has less pea-soup about it.

One thing, however, the country has—so I have always been informed—which town has not; that is, scenery. In London we have peeps, glimpses, views, effects, “bits,” and so forth, but not scenery. We have architectural rather than atmospheric perspective. But I take my scenery where I can, and I fancy I have as good an idea as most people what it is like. For I have one source of information which is common to all Londoners; and a second, almost more valuable, which is the valuable privilege of editors. In the first place, I have our picture galleries—the permanent institutions and the fugitive. Here the country of all

countries is spread out to my view, and it is generally genuine. The artists mostly did these things under white umbrellas, in places that have never seen an omnibus. For my benefit they actually ate of the abominations provided in country hostelries, and exposed themselves to the attention of curious cows. I know that excellent pictures of Venice are painted in Maida Vale, and an artist who dines every night at my club has for years never failed to produce three scenes annually from Catalonia, Algeria, and Cyprus—reminiscences of a solitary tour which he made in the seventies here and there about the Mediterranean. But the country painters go straight to nature in the autumn with the regularity of swallows, and they bring back for me loch and river scenery, seascapes, and landscapes, cornfields and hay meadows, until I can almost criticize the painting of a Devon hedgerow or point out the faults in a sunset scene in Connemara.

But my chief knowledge of scenery I derive from a source which is common only to my brother editors and myself. It is a rich fount of knowledge. It supplies visions more picturesque than pictorial art, more glowing than the colours of the palette, more vivid than life itself. It consists of the innumerable descriptive MSS., which for years it was my privilege to read with patient enthusiasm in the editorial chair. From these literary masterpieces I learned the re-

sources of the country; through them I was enabled to plunge into scenery of every kind that was ever created, and into some that never was; by their kind assistance I visited nearly every spot worth visiting upon the globe, personally conducted by writers whose gifts were of the order of Messrs. Gaze and Cook. First by gazing they selected their materials; then by literary skill they cooked them into tempting articles; and lastly I devoured the palatable *plats* in the calm light of the editorial sanctum.

The first thing I have always noted is that scenery is much the same all the world over—at least, it apparently strikes the beholder in the same manner and inspires him with the same language. A scene of grandeur is before me, it matters not whether in Norway or Terra del Fuego; rocks frown and cliffs beetle (I have never been quite sure what exactly a cliff does when it “beetles,” but I never knew a cliff of any pretensions that failed to do so), the ascent, the descent, and the height are all giddy; the waters lap the base or toss clouds of spray to the summit, according to the state of the weather; and always a seagull (sometimes a sea-mew) wheels above. I pass to a different scene—a quiet landscape. Here a river glides (occasionally steals) through a lush meadow; trees bend down their great branches to its placid flow; and cows appear in the middle distance—horses never. Or I am



taken away to the wilder hill-side and the river changes to a brook which frets, murmurs, babbles, sparkles over the stones, amid trees invariably mossed, and rocks grey and lichened. At this point poetry is always quoted, and my knowledge of English poetical language would have sensibly extended if it did not occur to everyone to quote from the same poem.

Another set of scenes describe the country village. This is not scenery proper, but it supplies some of the elements which occasionally appear in a rustic picture. From these I gather that country folk are contented and picturesque, that their conversational powers are limited and in dialect, and that while their homes are quaint, picturesque, tumbledown, they themselves are honest, open, horny-handed. The villagers are, as I have said, merely accessories to scenery, and one of their functions is to direct the traveller to the spot of which he is in search. This they invariably do correctly in MSS., though I have been told by wanderers in the country who have survived to return to town, that a rustic direction is an assistance which has to be severely discounted before you can act upon it. Of course, when a son of the soil undertakes to personally guide you in the direction he takes you by the most admirable short cuts; but this he does, within my experience, only in the case of lady authors, who appear to exercise the same sort of

fascination over rustics as over small *salons* of contemporary novel-readers.

But I must not omit to mention the leading feature of all the scenic descriptions which I have been privileged to read. There is a unanimous magnificence about literary sunsets, which leaves me fascinated every time I finish reading one. All the variations of red are there, from blood-red crimson to a faint blush of pink; all the shades of yellow, from glowing orange to delicate lemon; and "gold" and "golden" are thrown in with the recklessness of an Indian nabob. I can picture it all, as if I had actually seen it:—the broad sun resting on the hills or water (as the case may be), then slowly sinking, ruddy and burning, to his western couch; the after-glow spreading over the sky; and then the pall of sable night wrapping the erst glorious scene. But it is not over yet. There is one more inevitable feature of a sunset. One lone, solitary star shines out in the now darkened sky, as a man writes "Finis" at the end of his novel, or puts a dash after his signature. That star is the signal manual of the genuine writer of descriptive articles. Exigence of space has sometimes compelled me to draw my pencil through it; but I have done so with a sigh.

*"The Globe," July 27, 1887*

## THE PHILOSOPHER AS KING

ARISTOTLE says somewhere that any man who cultivates metaphysics after a certain age, say 30, ought to be kicked; and we may say the same thing of philosophy generally. Still, right and left, we come across people who, for the life of them, cannot get rid of the habit of looking at things philosophically. They learned the trick at college, and it sticks to them. They are in the position of the "artist" who, one crowned day, having drawn the pocket of an elderly gentleman blank, couldn't help picking and repicking it "just for practice."

The philosopher, of course, is occupied with many things of more practical importance than Ontology. Moral Philosophy, for instance, goes straight to the basis of all the actions of life, and, from a snake story to speculative investments, the rules of right conduct are laid down in ethical treatises. Without Natural Philosophy and the Royal Society it is questionable whether the world would go round. The Philosophy of Art is held by those who have written books on the subject to have contributed largely to the education of the R. A.'s of England; and since the day of the publi-

cation of "Sartor Resartus," every noodle has deemed himself capable of evolving what he calls a philosophy out of anything in the wide, wide world. Thus we get those interesting articles—upon the Philosophy of Cheeses, of Washerwomen, of Toboganning; "Soap, by a Philosopher;" and "The Stomach Pump, philosophically considered." Of course, it is impossible to say whether the writers of these wise works are very young men or very old; but that is merely an academical question, and does not interfere with the fact that we can rub along practically without reducing everything to philosophy.

Plato conceived an ideal condition of politics—when all philosophers should be kings and all kings philosophers. May this dream long remain in cloudland! We have had one philosophic king in ancient history, and his reign was followed by the rebellion of Jero-boam. England had one wise king in more modern story, and his reign was followed by the decapitation of his son. So much for kings being philosophers. The other side of the vision is when the philosopher is king. We should regard this prospect with equal dismay. Or even in a republic, whose Committee of Public Safety, Town Councils, or Local Boards should all consist of philosophers—what would the condition of business be? We may remember that it is not quite vain to push this question. Unpractical though it may

seem, it has a genuine interest at the present time. The essence of the philosopher is the abstraction of himself and his theories from the practical world before him. A theory once constructed, it is made to descend from heaven and fit itself to every earthly position which may present itself. There is the infallible theory. Circles are perfect, for instance, as the old philosophy ran. The perfect bodies, which are the heavenly, must move in perfect motions. Ergo, the planets must move in circles. Modern parodies of the same idea may be found in the utterance of modern faddists. Temperance is the ideal; the people should only be governed by the people: all men are equal:—such are some of the modern philosophies.

Now place the philosopher in the midst of an ordinary work-a-day world—how does he fare? He simply cannot get on. Take him in a small and partial instance, when he mixes in the life of ordinary men and women. He rises early in the morning; not from preference, nor from any anxiety to breakfast off worms, but because, from the examination of a large number of instances of men who have lived into doddering decrepitude, he has concluded that early rising tends to longevity, and it is obviously the duty of the philosopher to spare himself to an unphilosophic world as long as possible. An early riser in London, unless he happens to be in the vegetable business, is a nui-

sance. There is no place for him in the ordinary domestic economy. Housemaids, with curious weapons, designed for the repression of dust and spiders, view him with dislike. Stray footmen object to running against him in corridors, while they are yet in a condition of reproachful *habille*. He is offered tea, which is going up to sleeping beauties; he refuses. His philosophy has taught him the effects of tea upon the nerves. He is thus reduced to early self-communion upon an empty stomach, and breakfast finds him a jaded man. Or take another scene—a garden party. The philosopher arrives in appropriate *négligé*, a velvet coat, a floating tie, a soft hat. If he is short-sighted and deaf—he enjoys himself, for he is dressed more comfortably than anyone present. But if not, it cannot escape him that he is in the world of society, but not of it. Were he to be suddenly entrusted with the regulation of the afternoon's arrangements, chaos and dissatisfaction would be the result. He could sit down and write off an essay upon the proper conduct of a garden-party in Jupiter or Saturn; but on the earth, no.

These illustrations are not merely trivial; they find an application in the world of politics. Washington Irving, at the beginning of "Knickerbocker's History of New York," set forth "a multitude of excellent theories, by which the creation of the world is shown

to be not such a difficult matter as common folk could imagine." This is quite true. If you have not really got to construct a world, toy-building is the easiest thing imaginable. "Theories are mighty soap-bubbles with which the grown-up children of science amuse themselves, while the honest vulgar stand gazing in stupid admiration, and dignify these learned vagaries with the name of wisdom." The events of the week, scarcely yet half-concluded, supply already some illustration of the bubble-blowing. The thirteenth Conference of the Association for the Reform and Codification of the Law of Nations, was opened on Monday; and great may be the good that will come out of it. Here are learned men met together from all parts of Europe and America, scarcely hoping for any practical results, determined, however, to set forth a perfectly blameless theory. But the wheels of theory require to be greased with some practical oil. Otherwise the theory might as well at once be labelled "Very Curious," and stowed away upon the shelves of some international museum. Then we have the International Arbitration philosophy, and the Rights of Man philosophy, and the Natural Religion philosophy—and all to what purpose? Mankind, as a whole, will never adopt the same dress, food, or religion; but it is easy to prove that mankind is an ass not to do so.

*"Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret."*

There may be amusement, and even personal profit, in finding something craggy—as Byron wished—against which to break your intellect. But facts are facts, and no theories, however divine, will ever take their place.

For the legend of Phaeton is always young; and the true beggar on horseback is your modern philosopher as king.

*"The Globe," January 19, 1887*

## THE LATE CLOWN

"HERE we are again!" With this familiar introduction the good old clown was wont to make his Christmas reappearance upon the boards of pantomime. He does not say it now; and he has no cause to say it. There has been a change—a substitution; and we may exclaim sadly with the flea-trainer, who had lost one of his performing troupe, and to whom another, supposed to be the lost one, had been brought back from the person of a distinguished personage in the audience: "This is not my Napoleon!"

The true clown, whose loss we all deplore, was an amalgam of native and foreign metal. He had something in common with the Shakespearean fool, and



something with the merryandrew who figures in French and Italian masquerade. He may be said to be the old court jester dressed in the costume of Pierrot. Grimaldi represented in the most admirable manner the fusion of these two elements, creating the clown as we are familiar now outwardly with him, and inventing much of the clown's business. When Mr. Robert Sawyer, during a celebrated interview with an offended parent, was detected by Mr. Winkle senior, in the act of distorting his features, "after the portraits of the late Mr. Grimaldi"—an act which the old gentleman rightly conjectured to be intended by way of ridicule and derision of his own person—he was only practising one of the forms of art by which Grimaldi won his reputation. "Did you speak, sir?" inquired Mr. Winkle of the detected Bob. "No, sir," was Mr. Sawyer's unabashed reply. For Grimaldi's method was not merely dependent upon quip or joke, but upon the humour of dumb pantomime combined with a "make-up" in the highest degree comical. This was the genesis of the typical clown, whose reputation has sufficed for exportation beyond the British shores.

But there has been an evolution which is constantly proceeding; and with it a corresponding evolution of the clown. Spectacular display and scenic elaboration have largely driven, not only fairyland, but even the gaiety of fairyland, out of "Jack the Giant-Killer,"

“Bluebeard,” and “Cinderella;” and, as it is possible to see a pantomime nowadays which positively dispenses with a Transformation Scene, so the clown has taken lately to think that he can dispense with wit and humour, and substitute for them merely acrobatic feats. He lounges, no doubt, as usual; but he can also jump through a hoop. His hands are buried in his capacious side-pockets according to tradition; but he can turn a somersault with the most deft member of the company. That he should have added these to his former accomplishments is not to be regretted; but it is not merely an addition, it is a substitution. The clown has grown less witty and, generally, less funny with the growth of his agility. He has cultivated his spine and calves at the expense of his brains. No future Hamlet will take up the modern clown’s skull and moralise over it with a “Where be your gibes now? Your songs? Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the theatre on a roar?” Once that was a clown, sir, but, rest his soul! he’s dead.

As it was with Mr. Bob Sawyer in the scene already referred to, so it was with the latter day Grimaldi. There are no remains of the clown about him “save and except the extreme redness of his cheeks,” his costume, and some still surviving tricks with slides and red-hot pokers. The change had begun even in the days of Grimaldi, who had a rival in Bradbury, a man not so

much of elastic humour, as of humourous elasticity. It is not essential now that the clown shall sing any "Hey-nonny-nonny" song. The call for "Tippety wicket" or "Hot codlings" has passed to a demand for "flip-flaps" and "cart-wheels." When "les clowns Anglais" appear upon the stage of the Folies-Bergere in Paris, there is no sense of something missing, of an absence of humour owing to wit untranslatable into foreign language or incomprehensible to foreign ears; for there was never any wit to perish by process of transplantation. "Les clowns Anglais" buffet one another, leap and turn somersaults, dance breakdowns, catch hats, climb upon one another's shoulders, and so exhaust the list of their bodily accomplishments. Intellectually no demand is made upon them. And it might be added that even in matters of exterior the clown has fallen from the high estate of his low comedy. He even doffs the recognised garb of the good old clown. He condescends to swagger in swallow-tails, and exposes the shirt front of common life topped by the white tie of evening civilisation. He even carries a napkin, and abandons masquerading in Robert the policeman's helmet for the meaner role of Robert the waiter. The true clown, whose decadence we are lamenting, had, indeed, played in all parts that offered themselves for his impromptu adoption, but he had identified himself with none. He was always

clown first and something else afterwards. The modern specimen is an acrobat or burlesque comedian with a slight infusion of the clown.

That inimitable Dicky Suett, who played the "Twelfth Night" clown so much to Charles Lamb's delight, was, if we may trust his panegyrist, a blend of cathedral chorister with Robin Goodfellow. Lamb's sketch of his method cannot be illustrated from the boards of any theatre this Christmas. "A loose and shambling gait, a slippery tongue, this last the ready midwife to a without-pain delivered jest; in words, light as air, venting truths deep as the centre; with idlest rhymes tagging conceit when busiest; singing with Lear in the Tempest, or Sir Toby at the buttery-hatch." Where can the modern parallel to this be found? True, the part played by Suett was not that of the pantomimic clown, but it had the essence in it of what the old clown was, and what the modern clown should be; and the last words of Dicky to Robert Palmer might almost have been prophetic of the part to be played by his successors in the broader humour of the harlequinade—"O La! O La! Bobby!"

The clown, like the editor of a comic paper, is always said to be a sad man in private life. He is credited with "a serious thoughtful forehead," as one "in meditation of mortality." This may be well enough for private life, or for a comedian like Dodd,

taking pensively his last strolls in life in the gardens of Gray's Inn. But we do not care to have this excellent quality of sobermindedness brought before us upon the stage. The modern clown impresses the spectator with a sense of boredom and monotony, because he dishes up the old business without any novel flavouring. Hot poker and policeman are well enough when served up with new seasoning and sauces, in the shape of wit and song and repartee. But *toujours perdrix* is an acceptable menu for nobody, and continual grin begets perpetual yawn. "Away fool!"

*"The Globe," November 5, 1886*

## A NATION OF GUYS

WHEN Guido Fawkes (Foulkes, Fowlks, Fooks, or however he may be spelled) stored his powder cunningly under coals and faggots beneath the sacred seats of the Gladstones and Bradlaughs of the 17th century, he little imagined that he was destined to add a noun substantive to the English language. He would scarcely have been flattered had he known that his Christian name was in after ages to be accepted for the synonym for "a fright; a dowdy; a fantastical or ludicrous figure." Had he conceived this hideous probability his hand would probably have trembled

even more painfully than we know that it did when he signed his autograph for the last time.

In this way to be a godfather to a word of reproach, to stand sponsor to a popular mummery of derision, to be known to rugged ruffians as "Old Guy," to be perpetuated before the eyes of grinning centuries in a spineless, nerveless position, head dropping to one side and arms hanging helpless—all this is infamy enough, and even bigotry might have trembled at this penalty of failure. We can well imagine the injured ghost of Guido routing up the mysteries of philology in order to fix the stigma of the modern word "guy" upon some other source of derivation. We can picture Professor G. Fawkes (carefully upon his visiting-cards suppressing the full development of that single letter G) delivering to ghostly pupils in Hades a learned excursus upon the etymology of that fatal word. With what persistence would he dwell upon the convenient "Guiser" or "Guisard," that ancient Scotch mummer connected with old annals of Yule-tide, from which our words "guise," and "disguise" are with much probability derived! How he would turn, when he noticed his phantom scholars silently gibbering at this sophisticated derivation, to another more ancient source, and show how the Druids, the priests of the sacred gui or mistletoe, were known by the dignified title of Guys! And with what ingenuity he would dwell upon their

flowing white robes, so far to veil invertebrate drooping figures, and so manifestly the aboriginal protoplasm of the tattered robes of the modern Fifth of November Guy! In vain, and the professor would feel it would be in vain. And as with bony fingers he wiped the anguish of penitential marrow from his reeking soul, he would hear his philological class vanish into outer darkness with chattering jaws of derision and wails of infinite amusement. For from Guido Fawkes, and from nothing and nobody else, comes "guy," with all its associations of mockery and contempt.

"Let us," as the divines of half a century ago concluded, "let us apply these things to ourselves." Where the philosophy of Guydom comes home to the English nation is not apparent at the first glimpse even to the less stolid among the British public. The evening of the Fifth of November is crowned with the delights of marching guys, of blazing tar-barrels, of soaring rockets, of perplexing crackers and squibs. In all this uproarious jollity no philosophical merry-maker has ever been observed to steal aside, and sigh, and drop a tear of phophecy over the ceremonies of the night. No one has ever written a dolorous ode to prove that such as the Guy is, such we all shall be, if the developments of modern civilisation only march onwards unchecked.

Yet the fact is so. Fat men have seen it with sym-

pathy, and heavy men have pondered over it ponderously. Our nation is growing thin. We were once burly Britons. We once drained our flagons of ale, while roast beef of fabulous weight made our solid mahogany groan. Once we were proud of the girth of our waistcoats, and felt our calves with apoplectic satisfaction. Our chairs were more solid than they are now; our arm chairs were more capacious. John Bull, in fact, was then fat and well liking, and roared to all the herds of Europe with a confident consciousness of the powerful push of his horns. But now he is a mere phantom of his former self. His youthful hose, well worn, is now a world too wide for his shrunk shank. He is passing from a personage into a scare-crow—into a Guy, eventually, perhaps, into a rag heap. His foot is less broad, his palm less ample, his very clothes less voluminous. He no longer indulges in jack-boots or gaiters; he can no longer endure the weight of buttons as large as soup plates upon his coat; his neck is not swathed in many folds of neck-cloth, or comforted with the woollen of variegated “comforters.” He is but the shadow of what he was; he still calls himself John Bull, but he is only *magni nominis umbra*.

What has done all this? Is it merely the cycling decadence of a race that has attained its maximum prosperity? or is it a temporary phenomenon due to



appreciable causes capable of remedy or removal? The former alternative is obviously absurd. The British Empire is to-day stronger, more united, more extensive, more influential than at any other epoch in its history. The true cause is undoubtedly temporary and to some extent accidental. This once properly understood, the native Guy will once more recover his figure and vigour, and will no longer be a mere *homme de paille*. Science, mistress of the present age—she it is who has done this thing. The inspired Ministerial organ of Queen Science, has inoculated her subjects with a fatal, a selfish creed; a creed shortly expressed in five words—“Live as long as you can.” We have studied with pride the statistics of our population. We have struck with comfort the average of our individual existence. We find ourselves more numerous, we find ourselves more long-lived, and we put up a hymn of thankfulness. Sanitary authorities have done much towards this result; and physicians and dietarians and moralists have completed the business. We have certainly improved, if not upon Moses and Methuselah, at least upon the beer and beef men of the last few centuries. And so we are thinner, and perhaps less obstinate, less pushing, less enterprising than in the days of good Queen Bess or in the times when we swore terribly in Flanders.

And with it we have become more philosophical.

What else could explain the circulation of the "Spectator," the "Nineteenth Century" and other similar publications? What else can explain that a novelist's hero nowadays can combine a love of flirtation with a love of Kant? How otherwise can we see without lifting an eyebrow an uncut copy of Herbert Spencer's latest work lying with a lady's embroidery? But there is consolation in this. When vegetarians have removed our corpulence, and teetotalism has thinned the current of our blood, pale, emaciated, but always long-lived, we shall be in a position to embrace the tenets of Sakya-Mouni and dive into the mysteries unfolded by the Psychological Society. Then, when we have ceased to care which way our hats are brushed, when almshouses for bankrupt tailors cover the land, and when hosiers and washerwomen have taken in the last resort to organ-grinding, then we shall all blossom out into poetry. All histories will be epics, all leading articles lyrics, all prayers will be hymns. The poet laureate will sit upon a throne and utter rhymed legislation to a soft-hatted, ragged-cloaked House of Commons, and the kingdom of Guys will be come.

With all these and such like reflections the phantom quarters of the original Guido will console themselves, as they watch this evening's processions and revive once more in memory their horrid recollections of torture and death. Those thin and noisy multitudes

are but shadows of men who seized and punished the arch-conspirator. Give them but a little more time; let them carry a little further the art of carefully protracting their existence, and they will realise the prophetic conception of a shadowy nation of Guys.

## IN A CONSERVATORY

THERE is nothing particular about our conservatory. It is spacious, and you can walk about it without fertilising the plants with pollen conveyed upon your head; and, when our London friends come to visit us, they do not find the nap of their top-hats brushed the wrong way by great fronds of *Dendrifolium giganteum*. And more: here are comfortable lounge-chairs and little tables—from which you may conclude that many a plant has been enriched by cigar-ends and refreshed with the first squirt of a soda syphon. In fact, we live a good deal in our conservatory.

The moist, green smell of growing nature has a hospitable fragrance. There is a benevolent privacy about the great ferns and tall grasses which rise above the cozy nooks. The surroundings, as it were, invite confidences, from the strange stories of garrulous age to the *lenis susurrus* of young lovers whispering in the corners. The purple-flowering creepers droop down

as if to listen, and the stolid cacti crouch in respectful breathlessness. It is a place where sympathy is softly coaxed to maturity; a green grotto of secrecy, where many a quiet prompting of the conscience or gentle throbbing of the heart has come to the surface, like some curious bubble from the depths, and found relief by bursting to the friendly air. As we sit in the drawing-room, we can note the subtle influence of the conservatory as they come in to us for their cups of tea. With the elder ones there is more clapping on the shoulder, and nodding of genial heads together. With the young ones there is more shamefacedness, and they give a little conscious look at one another as they step into the light of the shaded lamps.

Such is our conservatory, and such its gentle uses. The charm of the place rids it of all suspicion of intrigue; the companionship of plants and flowers invests it with the virtues of a hermitage. We cannot conceive of an elopement plotted behind the stately chalices of those white-souled arums, or of words ever whispered there which might shock the spirits of the flowers. No fragrance more impure than the breath of curling *Nicotiana* is wafted to the presence of presiding *Flora*. It is but a humble offering to the flowers—from the weeds; and she takes it as incense offered at her shrine, and breathes her influence in return to the worshipful company of smokers.

But when we pass from our conservatory to the conservatories of romance, the atmosphere is changed indeed. The conservatory of the stage is a little world of villainy and imposture. The love-scenes which take place there are conducted, not in whispers, but in noisy confidences to the gallery. Hands clutch, and do not steal together—the kisses may be heard by the fireman at the back of the pit. There not the good only but the bad make love—gentlemen with heroines' fortunes in their eyes, and ladies covetous of some wicked baronet's lands and title. And while the bad people make love, the good people lie in ambush. Every fern of any respectable size conceals a virtuous sneak. He is generally an awkward fellow, too, for he is apt to knock down a flower-pot in his anxiety to hear as much as the dress-circle; and then the detected lovers go and look for him in the wrong corner, and give the good man time to get out by one of the innumerable doors which open out of the stage conservatory.

The ethics of eavesdropping, as represented in fiction, seem to require some reconstruction. We are familiar in French novels with the most abject devices of Parisian gentlemen to see and hear what they ought not. M. Adolphe Belot allows his gentlemen to bore holes to catch a glimpse of beauty when it is adorned the most. M. Dumas *filis* thinks nothing of putting a hero's eye to a key-hole. We remember one story of

his in which a gentleman, invited to supper at a lady's house, takes the opportunity of her temporary absence to have a look round her bed-room. The incident is not mentioned with reproach: it is presented apparently as the natural conduct, under the circumstances, of an unoccupied gentleman. Such gentlemen as these would be perfectly willing to carry out the freak of the Paul Pry, who posed as a Greek God in the shady corner of a conservatory, and enjoyed the conversation of couples sitting out the dances. Upon the stage the conservatory sneak does not take the trouble to dress as Hermes or Apollo: he can listen in his ordinary dress clothes.

And then, the stage conservatory is not like ours, an *adytum* or shrine of sanctity, the last point of retreat from the ordinary crowds of life. It is the entrance-hall for all the *dramatis personæ*. The baronet, the lady's maid, the murderer, the detective, share with the casual caller the right of *entrée*. The overgrown schoolboy uses it as the scene of his practical jokes. It is for him that the garden squirt is left handy, that he may confound the country cousin with an unexpected shower. The scenic transformation of the conservatory seems to us much as the transformation might seem to some mediæval monk, who, coming to life, should find his church, desecrated in the riot of revolutionary days, converted now to the uses of the

public corn exchange; or as to some old ecclesiastic of St. Bartholomew's might have sounded the clang of the smithy in the transept of the priory church, and the buzz of the impious factory about the ambulatory.

So we go back to our conservatory, the quiet bower of peacefulness and hushing life. The rare exotics, the curious foliage which it conserves are as nothing to the spirit of which this silent soothing greenery is the outward and visible emblem—the spirit of rest, of tranquillity, of confidence. Like that embowered cove to which the shipwrecked comrades of Æneas drew after the tempest which tossed them upon the shores of Carthage, it is a symbol of calm after storm, a haven of grace for souls that have prayed for deliverance from the wind and sea.

*"The Globe," January 21, 1888*

## DON JUAN

TO-MORROW is the centenary of Byron's birth. The recognition of this event requires no apology, for the baby who was born on the 22nd of January, 1788, made a noise in the world quite disproportionate to the short life which he enjoyed. He was a mere youth when he startled the world of literature with a satire; and he followed up this surprise by calling forth gen-

eral admiration by "Childe Harold," and general scandal by "Don Juan." His life has had attractions for some; his poetry for others; while not a few have found satisfaction in the unorthodox character of his general reputation.

Foremost, however, in Lord Byron's literary performances we must place "Don Juan," and chiefly on the grounds of originality and variety. It has never been imitated with success, because it is inimitable both in the qualities which have won for it general praise, and in those which have provoked the general blame. The subject was not original, but the treatment was; and Don Juan in Byron's hands received the kind of treatment which renovates a personality, as much as fine feathers can make a fine bird. For Don Juan is only externally a fine bird. He passes muster as a tolerable individual rather by grace of what we forget than of what we remember about him. Stripped of his fine clothing he might be a Saint Sebastian to receive the arrows of Exeter Hall; but clad in white-silk trunk hose, he is permitted to do what he pleases to the strains of Mozart's music. Don Juan or Don Giovanni, he is the same in essence; in a poem or as opera he is equally tolerated. And yet one scarcely sees why, remembering that so many better men are suffering social anathema or moral ostracism.

This consideration leads up to an ethical fact, and



goes hard to supporting the theory of the relative character of morality. The bigness or littleness of a thing depends so much upon the point of view. The slight projection upon a Matterhorn comes to be an impassable obstruction when we climb to it; the steep hill opposite, which we exclaim against as we descend into the valley, turns, by a well known law of vision, to an easy slope when we approach it from below. So in the moral world a character is good or bad in proportion to the keenness of the eye which we consent to turn upon it. Did we choose to see everything, we must perforce condemn. If we put the telescope to our blind eye we can declare that we do not see the signals and determine to continue the action. This is our case with regard to Don Juan. Taken in sum—the music and the poetry, the manners and the fine clothes thrown in, he is tolerated, accepted, welcomed. Analysed, he is only fit for the fifth act of the opera, when the nemesis of his life comes to him with an accompaniment of demons and red fire.

The world, however, by general agreement has decided to admit Don Juan into good company. He has become a classical sinner. We can smile without a blush at his catalogue of iniquities; we can shake hands with Robinson and call him a Don Juan, to the intense gratification of that estimable *bourgeois*. So it is with many similar characters. Lovelace is almost a

synonym for inconstancy and immorality; but if you hail Jones as a Lovelace he will be as pleased as if you had called him St. Anthony. He will be even more pleased, for in his heart of hearts he regards St. Anthony as an impossible monkish fiction. Moral estimates are formed in an odd way. A smart coat, lace ruffles and the interval of a century make Don Juan quite presentable; and Time has done for him what he has done for Jack Sheppard, Sir John Falstaff, and, perhaps, the blameless King Arthur himself. Time, who darkens and mosses the statues of all mortal men, whitewashes their characters. The heroes of epic story are seen by us only in their abstract presentment; the good lives after them, the evil is interred with their bones. So it is with Don Juan.

After all, is it a paradox to assert that, setting aside the admitted vices that may attend it, there is a certain fascination about inconstancy? The butterfly has been praised by poets for qualities which from the point of view of Dr. Watts are simply indefensible. And even the pious Doctor himself has condescended to admire and recommend to youth similar qualities, when displayed by his favorite busy bee. The wind is called "inconstant" with a truth to which every weathercock can bear witness; and yet no one blames the wind for blowing where it listeth. To be sure the moral purpose may make the difference. It is only in

Ovid that Zephyrus sighs for the nymph. It is only in "Hiawatha" that the wind courts the flower maiden of the prairie and scatters her life in downy flakes upon the air. We may admit the difference, but we cannot excuse the metaphor; and when we lightly talk about inconstancy, it may be inferred that we do not condemn it too severely. So far, we have only drawn an inference from Language; but turning to actual life we find the same inference supported by experience. Who blames the flirt, but Mrs. Fullquiver, with many marriageable daughters? The "*Lais multis amata viris*" is admitted into the social order as the inconstant moon is accepted in celestial circles; and she has as much influence over the tides of masculine passion. Lothario is not frowned at, but rather invited out to more dances, because the object of his attentions can never be accurately predicted for two successive evenings. When he is once caught, the code of behaviour, behind which Breach of Promise lurks as an ultimate sanction, forbids him the practice of inconstancy. But Don Juan is bound by no such ties—a fact of which the famous thousand and three Spanish ladies can scarcely have been ignorant.

It is evident, then, that Don Juan derives something of his popularity from a corresponding sentiment in the human breast. The sentiment may be coarsely expressed, and then we call it by hard names; lightly

sketched, it is called generally flirtation. When it strays from home and passes into bad company, it is forgotten, or remembered only to be condemned; when it returns, it is feasted with the fatted calf. In this happy condition rests the moral delinquency of Don Juan, Lovelace and Lothario. *La grande passion* is for the few, and is said to make them thin; the mild manifestations of the same disease are those of which account has most frequently to be taken, and the infected continue to flirt and grow fat. The world has agreed to deal kindly with the tendency to

“Forget that we remember  
And dream that we forget.”

even though a few stray tears may be shed by the forgotten ones. It was not the Romans only who made light of the lover sitting all night patiently at his lady's door. As one of our own poets has said—and his words are much quoted—

“Out upon it; I have loved  
Three whole days together,  
And am like to love the more  
—If it prove fair weather.  
Time shall moult away his wings  
Ere he shall discover  
In the whole wide world again  
Such a constant lover.”

It is in this spirit that we have agreed to say “Requiescat” to the true character of Don Juan.

*"The Globe," November 3, 1887*

## IN THE DENTIST'S ANTE-ROOM

"HAS anybody got any teeth?" said Louis XV. to his courtiers. This was before the days of dentistry, in those happy times when a man took his toothache to the nearest blacksmith, who cured it for the matter of a groat or so by the most radical method in the world. We have still stoics among us who survive to tell the tale of how they tied a string to their tooth and to the door-handle, and then asked a friend to be good enough to shut the door. Nowadays we scorn these cheaper methods and take our trouble to the dentist. "Trouble" is the word. By this euphemism the dentist of delicate feeling alludes to those agonies which the sufferer describes himself in less select language. He makes the whole process of dentistry as easy as possible. His reception of you is affability itself; his chair is so comfortable as to suggest forty winks; the name of his anæsthetic is suggestive of hearty merriment; and yet we ungratefully speak with abhorrence of a visit to a dentist. If rumour speaks truly this necessity of modern existence is shortly to be gilded with a further enchantment, and lady dentists will add a fresh charm and grace to the operations of stopping and drawing. Then, when pain and

anguish wring the molar or incisor, a ministering angel will stand by your tipped-up person and breathe all over your forehead with a sort of divine afflatus. At present we only look forward to this pleasure.

Who does not know the experience of waiting in the dentist's ante-room? You knock or ring at the door, and are received with hateful alacrity by a boy in buttons or a neat maidservant. Personally we prefer the maidservant. There is a real sympathy in the manner in which she takes your umbrella from you, and she is apt to look upon you almost tenderly as another of "master's" victims. But this first gratifying sensation is quickly dispelled by the appearance of the room into which she ushers us. It has a north aspect, and a sort of ancestral appearance. The furniture is of the heavy order, and there is a superfluity of chairs. Here are oil paintings, apparently of deceased dentists, and always on one, the longest wall, is one of those remarkable gloomy pictures in brown, measuring about seven feet by four and a half. It is a perpetual puzzle to make out the subject of that picture. There are trees and a castle, a quantity of rocks, a waterfall, several ladies and gentlemen capering on horseback at the foot of a cliff, and a hound or two. There is a lot of distance, and a vast expanse of sky of the most dull and dirty hue. Feudalism in brown varnish is the only vague conception which it

evokes. The sensations of ancient history aroused by this work of art are deepened by a glance at the solid sideboard, the ponderous clock, and a suit of Brummagem armour in the corner. Just now, the most pertinent fact of mediæval history seems to be the dentistry practised by feudal barons who wanted a little accommodation from the Jews.

You glance at the clock. It is either slow or fast—if it is going; but generally the clock in the dentist's ante-room does not go; probably it is too mediæval. There is no fire in the grate; it would be too cheerful. But joy: here is literature on the table. What are these books and papers? Here is a guide book to London, fifteen years old. Here is one of those volumes with an ornamental cover, containing details about certain steamship companies. A tract has been dropped here by a diligent sower of the good seed; its title is "The Nobleman and the Sweep," a story much to the advantage of the latter. And here are voting cards for charitable institutions, left by old ladies, who carry them constantly about in black bags. They set your mind thinking of decayed gentlewomen, indigent governesses, the deaf and dumb, seamen's widows—all very cheerful and profitable subjects of thought. You turn to stray numbers of the "Graphic" and "Illustrated." Old: all a fortnight or more old. You have read them all. But here is an odd volume of our im-

mortal friend "Punch." Age cannot hurt this. "Punch" like some other liquors, only improves by age; and you take up the volume thankfully, almost cheerfully. Is it irony, or what is it? You open at the picture of the children dancing upon the dentist's doorstep at the joyful intelligence that "Mr. —— is not at home." Your spirits tumble down to zero again. You, alas, have had no chance to-day of executing such a joyous *pas seul*. For you the dentist is at home, and in a few minutes——

The door opens. The hour has come. You must play the man. But no. It is Phyllis again, but not to lead the convict to execution. She ushers in a middle-aged lady, of the nervous order of creation. At a glance, she may be seen to be fidgety. She plumps, with a swoon-like plump, into one of the leather arm-chairs. (All dentists' arm-chairs in the ante-room are of leather, in the execution room of velvet. This is a very delicate refinement of cruel kindness.) Phyllis looks on her too compassionately, as if she were a middle-aged Iphigenia, and retires noiselessly. You are left alone with "Punch," the pictures, the tracts, and the middle-aged lady. Slowly, but surely, you relapse into that crusty condition of mind and countenance with which Dr. Johnson sat sullenly in the ante-chamber of Lord Chesterfield. Behind that wall on your left a more favoured caller is being slowly tortured.



You are like those victims of the Inquisition, standing in the torture chamber, while the rack is yet covered with the folds of the black cloth. To distract your attention you turn to the walls again. Now you notice other pictures—one of those hideous collections of variegated flowers, after Van Somebody or other, and another representing two cows standing by a blasted and leafless tree, the sort of picture which does duty in auction rooms for a Paul Potter. The room grows darker. The old lady is reading "The Nobleman and the Sweep," and sighs at the third page. You turn desperately again to "Punch." It is a hollow attempt at gaiety. You might as well be giving a ball in the family vault. The old lady has finished the tract, and is now examining the voting-cards suspiciously. Probably she has the cards of rival candidates for rival institutions in that black bag upon her left arm. Then you find yourself reduced to wondering what is the matter—you beg pardon, the "trouble"—with *her* teeth. Will she be stopped, or drawn? Will she have gas? If not will she scream? Or can it be that she has come for a new set of—

The door opens again. It is Phyllis. She smiles with the air of the governor of the prison coming to say to the French murderer, "Jules Favie, the President has rejected your petition. Courage: the hour has come." She says smilingly, "Mr. Smith." You

rise unwillingly; you were impatient two minutes before. As you rise, you envy the elderly lady who has taken advantage of the opportunity to swoop upon your volume of "Punch." You delay; you fumble for your hat—and gloves—and umbrella. Phyllis directs you to the hat and gloves, and explains that your umbrella is in the hall. She is inexorable. She draws you on to the door. You assume an air of cheerfulness and alacrity. It is a miserable failure. The middle-aged lady is almost smiling at your bravado, and Phyllis is still sympathetically persistent. Thus boldly fearfully, you stagger from the dentists' waiting-room.

In another ten seconds you are in the sanctum—in the presence of the velvet chair, of the cabinet of instruments of torture, of the little basin upon a movable metallic support. And you hear, as it were through a mist, a gentle voice saying to you, "Good morning, Mr. Smith; now let us see what the trouble is."

*"The Globe," April 6, 1887*

## BREAKFAST IN BED

THIS luxury is the privilege of invalids—genuine and sham. All except the offensively energetic enjoy the prospect of thus stealing a march upon other miserable mortals, while professing to bewail their hard

fate in being so unkindly visited by Providence. "How are you to-day?" you say politely to the hypochondriac in the afternoon. And the humbug answers wearily, "Better, thanks; but I had to have my breakfast in bed this morning." Yet this same gentleman, when he opened his eyes about the time which Bishop Ken would have advised him to sing lustily—

"Awake my soul, and with the sun," etc.,

at once without feeling his pulse or looking at his tongue in the glass, resolved obstinately to have his breakfast in bed. What did he care that he gave the leading female of his family endless trouble in excogitating for him a dainty breakfast tray? What thought did he give to the fact that twice he had to ring up the indignant Jemima—once for salt, which had been overlooked, and again for a second go of everything, digestible and indigestible? Like Hippocleides or Gallio, he was perfectly indifferent to these matters. He only knew that he had the pick of the toast rack, that his tea was "specially selected," that there was all about him a pleasant flavour of family anxiety—as it were, petitioning him not to die, not to break out into a rash, not, generally, to do anything infectious, expensive, and disagreeable.

The poor man cannot afford to have his breakfast in bed. No one under the rank of a voter can be permitted this aristocratic indulgence. The poor man's duty

is not to miss a single day's work, except under the pressure of sudden death or a summons. All the moralists assure him that his life's conduct should consist in early rising, hard work, the minimum of beer, no spirits, or bad language, prompt return to the bosom of his family, one pipe, some useful evening reading (when possible aloud, for the general edification) and bed. This scheme of existence does not provide space for malingering, for dainty diseases, for "not feeling quite so well this morning," and so absolutely excludes the breakfast in bed. It is doubtful even whether the poor man would regard it as anything but an annoyance, a sort of earthquake upsetting of his trivial round of common tasks, and a thing to be looked upon with suspicion as savouring of rheumatiz, or fever, or, vaguely, of being "tuk awful bad." But that which is the labourer's Purgatorio is the schoolboy's Paradiso. To him to "stop in bed" is heaven, to have breakfast in bed is the seventh circle. Setting aside the merely animal luxury of the thing, what does he not lose by it—loss being to him in these matters the most perfect form of gain? *Imprimis*—one wrestle with the gospel according to St. Luke in the original Greek; *secundo*—one morning chapel; *tertio*—the pleasure of toasting two rounds of toast for Jones major, and the off-chance of being kicked by that dignitary if they are at all burned; *quarto*—the annoy-

ance of telling old Swistail another lie at nine o'clock about certain non-forthcoming 500 lines of Maro's *Æneid*;—and so on. In exchange for these privations how delightful the extra sleep, how appetising the breakfast sent up by incredulous Mother Saunders (Matron)—and oh! how ac-cursedly annoying when the doctor, making his round, pronounces the ailment to be “nonsense,” and sends the ailing one forth to ten o'clock school. But, still, fate cannot touch him. That day he has taken breakfast in bed.

Unhappily there comes a time of life when this picnic of the bedroom ceases to be enjoyable. It was always, in the eyes of physiologists, an objectionable habit. These gentry knew the laws of digestion, and its channels, with other inconvenient facts of internal economy. And they always protested against breakfast in bed, unheeded by the youthful sluggard. But as man grows older, he goes over to the physiologists. There comes an acute sense of draughts upon the middle-aged neck if the breakfaster sits up in bed; while, if he lies down, he cannot help speculating upon how the ancient Romans dodged it at the *triclinium*. Did they, too, find fragments of *crustula* (*Anglice*, toast) insinuating themselves against remote parts of the frame, which had hitherto been considered

inaccessible? Did they, too, get pins and needles in the supporting elbow, and cramp in alternate legs? And, then the bother of establishing an amicable understanding between the breakfast's legs and the breakfast tray. Some demon seems to possess that tray. You keep your eye on it, it behaves beautifully; not a saucer slips, not a cup tips over. But turn away your head for two or three minutes, and a positive revolt breaks out. There is a general stampede of everything to one corner of the tray; and blessed is the breakfaster who quells that revolt without any more disagreeable *contretemps* than a little strawberry jam upon the coverlet. But, of course, the nuisance of crumbs, already hinted at, is the chief of all the annoyances attending breakfast in bed. What marvellous power of travel they have! A needle in an old lady's body does not travel so fast, nor makes its appearance in such wholly unexpected places. The most extraordinary precautions on the frontier are not effective against these insidious smugglers. They successfully "run" the custom house barriers of napkins, and carefully adjusted sheets. Like cholera germs, they defy all known laws of transmission. A crusty specimen, which you could almost vow you had swallowed, will the next moment cheerfully dig you in the thigh, when you believed him

to have been safely entombed about nine inches further up.

Nor is this an evil only for the day. It hands on, like the Greek Atè, a perfect genealogy of irritation. Cast your bread upon the waters, and you will find it after many days. Cast your toast upon your bed, and you will find fragments of it, for at least a week—in a well-disordered household, that is to say. Of course, this is not as it should be. These things do not happen in castles with moats round them, nor in Belgrave Square, nor in prison cells where prisoners make their beds and lie upon them (just as the worthy judge remarked to the offenders at conviction). But in the ordinary English household, Jemina is guilty of many perfunctory services, for which it is merely suicidal to rebuke her; and in bed-making she holds the Pharisaical view that the making smooth the outside of the eider-down and coverlet is quite sufficient for British bodies. That is why you know on Tuesday night (and through many subsequent nights) that on Tuesday morning you had your breakfast in bed.

"The Globe," February 24, 1891

## THE CARVER

It is not long ago that every male of any position was liable to be called upon to hack at a piece of beef or mutton. Either in his capacity as head of a family, or in his capacity as armer-in of the lady of a strange house, he was doomed to struggle with a joint or wrestle with a fowl, until he lost all interest in his own dinner, and only prayed that no one would "come again" to his particular dish.

The *diner à la Russe* has largely banished this hateful duty, and now very few people of any respectability can carve with even tolerable decency. And no one regrets the change, except perhaps the few old-fashioned people who used to pride themselves on their carving, and knew the science of making a breast of turkey go round at a dinner of fourteen. The rest of us, who have invariably missed the jointing of a fowl or a loin of mutton, who have turned pale at the sight of a complicated fore-quarter of lamb, who have splashed the gravy all over the table, and occasionally swept away half-a-dozen wine glasses with a nervous elbow,—the rest of us are quite content to see all the carving



done from a side table. We can eat more and talk more, and the dinner is much better carved.

But while the amateur carver is disappearing, except in homely households, the professional carver is still with us, and he still preserves his dignity as a master and stylist in his solemn department of public affairs. You will see him at any restaurant where joints have not entirely given place to "foreign kickshaws," and his importance becomes the greater as he ministers to the wants of unhandy people who can only marvel at his skill. His very dress of white marks him out as a sort of high priest of an ancient and stately ceremony; and the gravity of his demeanour never varies, even if he be only engaged in presiding over the sacrifice of a beefsteak pudding. You will see him also at the club, a personage of scarcely less importance than that diplomatist, the butler himself. Here he has no distinctive dress—at least, in the most stately clubs; but that is all the more reason why his gravity should never be even on the verge of giving way. As a matter of fact, it never does give way. No one has ever seen a carver do more than smile a deprecatory sort of smile.

You note his movements with respect—no joint has any terrors for him. His large knife and fork are handled with the careless ease of a master; his

stroke is delivered with the accuracy of a professor of fencing. He is impartial too; he does not exhaust all the good cuts for the benefit of a few plates; he gives something of the bad with the good; but the whole is so artistically disposed that the general impression is wholly good, and the gradation skilfully concealed by a varnish of all equalising gravy.

Remember the carver—that is one of the first axioms in the Euclid of the dining room; and in that case the carver will remember you. He will remember your taste, however absurd, however particular. If you love the Pope's eye, he will have some of it for you; if you prefer liver to gizzard, yours is the liver wing; if you like brown fat, if you like your beef underdone, if there is an oyster in the last helps of the beefsteak pudding—yours is that brown fat, or that underdone cut, or that oyster. There are people who look upon the carver as if he were a knife-cleaning machine, as if he were a mere hewer of joints and drawer of gravy, as if he were no more to the diner than the plate, the knife and fork, and the napkin. Never was a greater mistake. The carver can give you a good or a bad dinner according to his interest in your happiness; it would be absurd not to create in the mind of such an artist a direct interest, a positive

determination that you shall be happy, contented—and generous.

Nothing shows the supremacy of a good carver more indisputably than his dealings with the fag end of a joint or bird. Your amateur will exhaust a joint with half a dozen slices; his notion of a bird is that of the price-list of a restaurant—two wings and two legs. Not so the scientific artist. He knows better than to carve a saddle of mutton at right angles, which reduces that joint at once to the level of an ordinary loin; nor does he waste it with a few long cuts which will presently bring him to the fat. The somewhat more than half cut, supplemented with a slice of another flavour from the hinder part, or with a slice of yet another flavour from the undercut, ekes out the impartial “helping,” and supplies an agreeable combination of quantity and quality. When to this is added the interested air with which he will perhaps himself present you with this work of art, you feel that it would be little less than rank ingratitude to be dissatisfied with his skill. And the art of bird carving is as subtle. Never exhaust the breast in carving the wings. With a slice from the breast many less eligible portions may be made presentable. No good carver ever served up a drumstick; but a slice or two from that limb, decorated with a little from the breast,

a morsel of liver and half a sausage, has frequently satisfied even the most exigent appetite.

Let us then praise famous carvers, and our fathers who did not "forget" them. An analogy from trade supplies a hint as to their true importance in the world of eating. Even as "carver and gilder" is a name of importance to all who are interested in pictorial art, so is the carver the gilder also of the banquet in club or restaurant. A bad frame has often spoiled a good picture; bad carving has often spoiled a good dinner. It was perhaps with some such feeling as this that a famous mistress of entertainments, in the days when people really entertained, used to carve from her own end of the table, but, recognising the importance of this great social act, would previously dine alone, so that her mind might not be distracted from the proper performance of what was then one of the most serious duties of a host or hostess.

*"The Globe," February 2, 1887*

## STOCK IN TRADE PHRASES

"I'M as innocent as the drivelling snow," protested Leander Tweddle. The hairdresser of Mr. Anstey's creation may at least be praised for a welcome variation upon the monotony of the old comparison. And the truth of the new comparison is as great. For "drivelling," which we may take to be "gently falling," snow has, at least in London, a better chance of purity than that "driven" substance whirled by the wind into fifty dirty corners, dashed against grimy area railings after pirouetting about a smutty lamp-post, and finally deposited—a symphony of grey and black—under a gloomy archway leading to some court of Erebean darkness.

These sempiternal adjectives—when shall we get rid of them? We might fancy ourselves in the days when the world was young and all the literature of a period was concentrated into the utterances of wandering minstrels, so faithfully do we cling to our time-honoured traditional epithets. That was a trick well understood by Homer and his tribe, and pardonable in their case in view of the pressing demands of hexametric verse. Then all Achæans

were well-greaved, all Ethiopians were blameless; Hector had always a flashing helm, Ulysses a permanent reputation for the sack of cities; Phthia was always the land that brought forth heroes, as Achaia was always the country that was grazed by horses. The good people of the day were prepared for this. They would have missed and resented any other ending to the bard's hexameter; just as the music-hall never appears to weary of its *improvisatore* rattling off his stanzas by plentiful assistance of recurring tags and catch words. There is a certain order of mind, as George Eliot has remarked, upon which repetition, not novelty, produces the greatest effect. And it is not perhaps quite fanciful to attribute this fact to a certain intellectual immaturity—not to say childishness—both in those people who 3,000 years ago listened with pleasure to Homer and in those who now catch up cheerily the words of a chorus from MacDermott. The child takes eagerly to reduplication, which is only the simplest of all forms of repetition; and from crowing "gee-gee" and "puff-puff" to chorussing, night after night and day after day, "Two lovely black eyes! O, what a surprise!" is not such a very long journey. However, the fact remains that, when the world was young, fixed epithets had their invariable place in the earliest epics, and were

handed down to later poets as part of the epic tradition. It is for this reason that the schoolboy finds himself perpetually encountering in the Æneid "pius" or "pater" Æneas, acquires early in life a contempt for such a poverty-stricken poet as Virgil. He does not naturally appreciate the delicate art that knows when to lay aside the conventional "fixed epithet." He does not notice that at the critical scene in the fourth book the hero of the poem is skilfully called "dux Trojanus"—an occasion on which, as the epigram has it,—

"Pius Æneas were absurd,  
And *pater* premature."

This delicacy of distinction is not for the British public. Here is a nation that never wearies of "bluff" King Hall, of "good" Queen Bess, of "bloody" Mary, of the "pious and immortal" memory, of the "judicious" Hooker, and of "rare" Ben Jonson—a nation that cannot mention Herrick, for example, without calling him "old," or Goldsmith without calling him "poor." These adjectives are attached, as it were, permanently to the reputations of the important personages whom they are supposed to characterise. Umbra never clung more closely to a Roman nobleman at a feast. Death is so far from parting them that it even consecrates their union. While we vary our epithets for the

living according to their varying actions, or, at least, according to our shifting impressions of their sayings and doings, to the dead we are always constant, and every year only deepens that constancy. Posthumous memoirs may shake our impressions, but will never tear us from our popular phraseology, from those fixed adjectives which are strictly bound up with our fondest, because they were our earliest and most childish impressions. Nations feel like individuals in this matter. As Johnny Crapaud is scarcely yet dead for the British patriot, so "frog-eating" is still for our proletariat the distinctive epithet for Frenchmen, and "perfidé" is married to the French *bourgeois* conception of Albion.

Passing from nouns adjective to nouns substantive, we may notice the same tendency. A happy conception, a favourite figure of speech, once crystallised into a living presentment, enjoys an immortal existence upon the tongues and in the imagination of a nation. The British lion, the Russian bear, the American eagle, John Bull, Brother Jonathan, the Heathen Chineé—what amount of writing their names upon oyster-shells could banish them from our common talk and literature? We cling to them dearly, as every nation does to its epithets for kings, and to its Christian names for popular favourites: John Lackland, Billy Rufus, Henri le Bon, Charles



Martel, the Black Prince, Louis le Bien-aimè, the Great Frederick, Fair Rosamund, Peter the Great, Abraham Lincoln, Charles Dickens, Tom Hood, Jeremy Taylor,—these are but some instances of this popular prejudice. These and such like phrases bring old friends nearer to us, and the conservative instinct of the people does not readily give them up in favour of any new fangled nomenclature. Mr. Freeman has in vain struggled to reconcile us to more correct orthography of Anglo-Saxon names; but we remain constant to Alfred and Athelstan and Ethelbald, just as we cling to our apocryphal stories respecting the discoveries of glass and gravitation, to the pictures of the meeting of Wellington and Blucher after Waterloo, and to our legends as to the origin of the Moonlight Sonata and the Requiem.

And from names and stories we might pass on to ideas. These are often, no doubt, embodied in a phrase, and thereby rendered only the more enduring. They are not one whit the less untrustworthy. People could die for Magna Charta who could not mention one of its provisions. Men will swear by the Habeas Corpus Act who cannot translate the name which it bears, and believe in the jury system, who do not sincerely trust half-a-dozen of their fellow countrymen. “Liberté, égalité, fraternité,” has stirred the spirit of patriots who have

never deigned to ask themselves if there can be any meaning in equality between brother and brother. Free Trade has captivated many a voter who has never concerned himself with the question of the protection of infant industries. Home Rule is destined perhaps to work in a similar manner upon the intellects of the humbly intelligent. There are two classes of mankind to whom such phrases greatly appeal—the philosophic speculators who live in the clouds of a political dreamland, and the mass of unthinking human beings who vaguely hope for the unattainable as they hope for a heavenly hereafter. As to the practical steps which should be taken either to make a theory work, or to convert a phrase into a reality, or to win a way to heaven by a process of earthly labour—they never give to this part of the business the smallest thought. They are content to lay hold of the phrase and to let others work out the practical salvation of the idea.

When Ayoub Ben Mirza walked among the tombs of the departed, he saw written above their resting-places that they all—all, without exception, were “Blesséd.” And to him, who from his childhood had lived in the seclusion of a hermit desert, it seemed as if he had lighted upon a new world, into which no sin had ever entered, or from which all sinfulness had been purged, till he was sadly

roused from his dream of millennial perfection by the careless words of his conductor:—"There they lie, indeed; and the stone-carver lies above them." Blessed" was but a conventional phrase.

*"The Globe," August 6, 1887*

## PHYLLIS

"'WHY have men to wait on you,' he had argued, 'when you have women—soft of foot, soft of voice, and charming to look at? To take your chocolate from James or Adolphe is no gratification at all; to take it from Leilah or Zelma is a great one.'" This is the apology, scarcely amounting to an "argument," for his pretty Easterns, which Ouida puts into the mouth of one of her "god-like" heroes; and whatever modern morality may think of the Georgian and Circassian establishment of Chandos, it cannot be denied that, as an ideal picture, it is not without fascination. But then it is only a picture, only a dream descending in the moonlight. It never was, nor will be more real than the combination of Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Helen, Catullus, Alcibiades, and Phœbus Lykogenes—the great Chandos himself.

We have heard lately the funeral dirge of the

domestic system chanted by a correspondent of "The Times." Are things really so hopeless as this despairing one would have us believe? Must we all go and live in flats or hotels, have our visitors ushered in automatically by a system of lifts, have our beds made by machinery, and turn on breakfast and dinner as we turn on gas and water? We do not believe it; and yet we readily admit that there are signs of change upon the domestic horizon. The masculine sun is setting; Apollo, of the gigantic calves, is going down in the West-end; and, through the flushed evening-light, is growing more and more silvery clear the softer form of the feminine moon—not Astarte, not Diana, but Phyllis.

There are some duties which only a man can perform properly. We shall not yet awhile see Boadicea driving our chariots in the park, or Camilla taking out our horses for exercise. But, within the house, there is no reason why Yellowplush should not give way to Phyllis. Those who have tried the change by way of experiment are rarely tempted to drift back to the old state of things. Time was when men-servants were monuments of their master's respectability; they were the outward and visible signs of his inward and bank-account prosperity. Sir Gorgius Midas was annoyed because only three of his numerous sixfooters waited up to

welcome him when he returned with a friend from the club. What he expected to see, what alone could have tickled the pride of his aristocratic feelings, was the door opened by one footman, with a butler hovering in attendance and half-a-dozen footmen arranged like statues all the way up to the principal staircase. That would have been truly Belgravian—the genuine flavour of the Magnifico Pomposo of flunkeydom. But the pleasure of a whole menagerie of male servants is beginning to pall. The private “man” remains still as great a comfort as ever; but the footman is growing to be a nuisance. Possessing none of the suppleness of the foreign servant, he has been killed by his own diginity. He “knows his place” too well, and his place is likely to know him no more.

Glance, by way of contrast, for a few minutes into the pleasant house of our friend Lucullus. He is a man of wealth and taste; he is beyond the mere prejudice of fashion. You ring, and are at once admitted. The door is opened quietly, and you are ushered in by a smiling Pyrrha, *simplex munditiis*, as in the days of Horace the connoisseur. You are not marched in a large footed manner across the hall and handed over—man and all—to the tender mercies of another stately menial, but Pyrrha trips before you, drawing you on noiselessly, gracefully,

to the hanging portière beyond. And there Lalage drifts down and receives you like a guardian angel, and takes you up the broad stairway to the sanctum of Lucullus and Luculla. You hear your name pronounced in a gentle tone, clearly and accurately; Luculla rises to receive you; with just the faintest gleam and rustle, the door has closed quietly behind you, and Lalage has vanished. Tea will come in presently, and the pleasant experience be renewed. By instinct the tables are put in the right place; you feel at once that it is not the service of mechanical routine; you enjoy a restful sense of the right thing being done in the right way—with a touch of grace and gentleness, a footfall as of a ministering angel.

There is another form of the same scene, and for some people it may have its charm. You cannot play tricks with a man-servant, nor express admiration of his personal charms by a variety of wonderful grimaces—as Mr. Bob Sawyer wooed the girl who opened the door of Mr. Winkle *senior's* old, red-brick house. Mr. Pickwick behaved himself on that occasion with a propriety worthy of his spectacles and gaiters; but the least intoxicated of his companions was more flippantly inclined. "There is not the least occasion for any apology, my dear," Mr. Pickwick had said with good humour, in answer

to the excuses of Phyllis. "Not the slightest, my love," said Bob Sawyer, playfully stretching forth his arms, and skipping from side to side, as if to prevent the young lady's leaving the room. But every caller is not an "odous creetur," and does not compel Phyllis to emphasise her distaste for indiscriminate attentions by imprinting her fair fingers upon the objectionable visitor's face. Still, short of that, minds not necessarily ignoble do feel a certain satisfaction at making inquiries of a trim little figure in spotless cap, cuffs, and apron and impressionable youth has been known to blush at laying paste-board in the hand of Phyllis. Even a rough sea-captain has not been unconscious, as he was ushered from the door, of a sort of echo in his nautical breast of "Farewell, my trim-built cherry."

In fact, in everyone's heart of hearts there is a soft corner for the ideal Phyllis. If Phyllis only knew it! There have been hard things said of her; she has been accused of being too fond of the attentions of British youth—as if that was not one of the charming *défauts de ses qualités*. She has been said to be swift in giving notice, though prompt to receive it. Ladies of eagle eye have seen her toss her head, when "spoken to" in a manner indicative of a "girl who would do anything!" For the present there is a little estrangement—a trivial

misunderstanding. But Phyllis and her mistress do not stand apart like Coleridge's famous cliffs, the scars remaining to mark their everlasting severance. "She will return; I know her well." Venus standing on the doorstep will once more be a pleasant reality. Afternoon calls will once more be a pleasure; afternoon tea will become a foretaste of the Mahometan Paradise. Leilah, Zelma, and Zuleika may not be there; but there will be Phyllis and Lalage, and all the chorus of handmaidens whom Englishmen know by the generic name of Mary.

She was a barbaric Queen—that famous Dido—when she made her great feast for the shipwrecked Trojans; but though fifty handmaidens laboured in the kitchen, one hundred other maidens mixed with as many youths to serve the dishes and pour the wine. Jupiter, that knowing monarch, took his cup from the hands of Hebe as well as Ganymede, and found, we cannot doubt, his nectar all the sweeter. The modern application of the same principle is to discard the service of men, to say with old Mr. Wardle of his masculine attendant, "Joe, Joe: damn that boy!" and to take up the words of Horace, applying them to Lalage and Phyllis, or whatever the name of the ministering maiden may be—

"Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo,  
Dulce loquentem."



*"The Globe," February 7, 1888*

## VOICES OF THE NIGHT

THESE voices to the poet sound pleasant. They wake his better soul that slumbered to a holy, calm delight. The poet has a special fondness for spectres; he likes to see the forms of the departed enter the open door, and to mark their slow and noiseless footsteps; he does not even shudder when they lay their gentle hands in his. But Jones is not a poet, and he simply loathes the voices of the night.

Jones, who is methodical in his habits of life, has divided the voices into three periods—a sort of palæozoic, mesozoic, and neozoic epochs. The palæozoic extends from bedtime till one a. m.; the mesozoic until the first signs and sounds of approaching dawn; the neozoic from that time onward until his tub. And he has proceeded to notice this similarity between the geological and the nocturno-vocal epochs. The animate and the inanimate sounds, what he calls the fauna and flora of the periods, are peculiar each to its own epoch; though not unseldom the connection of the three is marked by the recurrence, for instance, of a palæozoic species in the mesozoic epoch, with only

such differences as are produced by the orderly evolution of the kind.

In the palæozoic period Jones finds innumerable traces of man. At this period man had become almost extinct; many of the race had already been laid to rest. But a certain number still survived, though our philosopher is not of the opinion that the law of the survival of the fittest holds true with regard to them. Some he imagines to have been even absolutely unfit to be out at this period, and these chiefly he pronounces to belong, not to the aqueous, but to the bibulous families. From the 10th to the 12th hour man seems chiefly to have subsisted upon cabs, omnibuses, and a curious kind of food called "specials." The most remarkable voices of the night indicate the paramount necessity which lay upon man to procure these necessities of life. The female of man is also not uncommon at this period; her voice is less strident than the male, but Jones has often recorded upon his tympanum some fine specimens of the *mulier ebriosa*. This kind is easily distinguishable from another species of the same genus, for the *homo ebriosus* is a sort of anemone among nightly voices; it is only half articulate, and belongs as much to the flora as to the fauna of the palæozoic epoch. It is rumbling, like the voice of the hansom; grumbling, like the voice of the "grow-

ler;" heavy and thick, like the voice of the vegetable cart plodding on its way up to the City market.

Most of these almost disappear in the mesozoic period. Night has then passed the middle of her course; her steeds are dropping down the height of heaven, as the ancients conceived; then sleep is given to mortal men—to all except Jones. Now he hears an occasional shrill drunkard, a stray, belated hansom, the rattle of the fumbling latchkey, or the tramp of the policeman going on his rounds. There is a steady lumber of wheels, bearing along cabbages, potatoes, and green stuff, and the quick trot of the suburban greengrocer's cart; but these are only occasional disturbances which, scarcely noticed, break the monotony of the quiet of middle night. Then begin the mysterious voices. The door creaks; the wind whistles in the chimney; the mouse stirs in the wainscot; the window rattles. It is nothing—so Jones tells himself as he lies awake; but it sets his soul thinking upon burglars. Ha: what is that in the corner? A dark thing: it moves; it takes human shape; it is approaching. Bah: it is only Jones' greatcoat, hanging on the furthest peg. He sneers at himself for his folly, as he turns himself round on his pillow. This time he will sleep—and to the devil with foolish fancies. But, what is this? A step on the staircase outside. A long, cautious

creak. A light footfall; then a quick succession of footfalls, and a rustle as of spectre garments. Ghosts this time, if ever such a thing as ghosts existed. Jones, after dinner, has derided their existence at his debating society, and told funny stories about them. There is no fun in Jones now, and the perspiration is on his forehead. He hears quick breathing outside his door, and holds his own breath to listen. So does the wily ghost, with nothing but half an inch of deal between them; and it wants yet three hours to daylight, three hours of breathless suspense. In vain he calls to mind the behaviour of saints who have tackled unearthly visitors with success; in vain he tries to recall the exorcisms which they found effectual. Only one monotonous line from Virgil comes back to him:—

*“Obstupuit, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit.”*

It is only Miss Jones' favourite Fido after all—Fido, upon whom that maiden lady relies for safe protection from burglars and other evil men. And when Jones realises this fact, another voice of the night is heard, a voice tempestuous, passionate, profane. It is the voice of Jones at 3.35 a. m., execrating the wandering Fido.

Cats: They are there in legion. On the roof, in the back-garden, by the scullery—a whole seraglio. They cry aloud to one another under the moon. It is the cat of Jones, no doubt, upon hospitable thoughts intent. Her master hears her voice, and vows to brain her before next night-fall. The mournful mew, the peaceful purr of the innocent creature who slinks innocently into the breakfast-room in the morning, who could imagine that they could swell to such cacophony of midnight orgy? What diabolic spirit enters into cats in the night-time, that tunes their voices to such raking, rasping melody?

. . . . .

A sudden jingle, a rattle, a gallop, a roar of wheels, like a whirlwind going for a drive in a dog-cart. Ah: a fire engine; it passes, as it came, most swiftly. At least “proximus Ucalegon” is not burning; but Jones lies awake speculating upon the locality and extent of the disaster. Another engine—and yet another. It must be a big fire. He is almost tempted to get out of bed and prospect, but reflects that it is now his duty to try to get to sleep and defy the voices of the night.

Vain endeavour: The mesozoic passes away into the neozoic period. The light faintly glimmers through cracks in blinds and curtains. A pestilen-

tial cock lifts up his voice and calls to drowsy hens. The dull moan of the "hooter" calls the workman to the scene of his early labours. The rattle of the milkman's cans begins to be heard. The clattering newspaper carts hurry by to the paper trains. There is a stir below stairs; a sound of the opening of neighbours' doors; a ramming and poking, as if all the furnaces of the Cyclops were being raked out by the giants; a whirl of scratching brooms; a clatter of scurrying scuttles. Then a rat-tat-tat at the door of Jones' room; and the voice of the maid with his shaving water is the last and least welcome of all the voices of the night.

"The Globe," June 8, 1889

## MEIOSIS

THE beautiful figure called Meiosis is not the private property of the grammarians, though they make the most fuss about it. Nor is its use confined to classical writers, such as Diodorus, Siculus, Moses and Miss Braddon; it is found in profusion in the works even of the illiterate; the New Journalism knows it; so do the elegant *coteries* of Billingsgate fishwives.

The grammarians thought to make it more se-

curely theirs by calling it also Litotes, from the Greek word which means simplicity. But simplicity in language is not always meiosis, as can easily be seen from a single instance. What can be more simple than the letter D, followed by what printers call a two-em rule? This is really the simplest form known to language of an imprecatory expression; we doubt whether Archdeacon Farrar or Professor Max Muller has met with any briefer anathema in the hundreds of languages and dialects into which they have dipped. But "d——" is not Litotes; whereas "bless you" said with a vicious countenance by an old gentleman upon whose corn you have trodden, is a very good instance of this figure of speech. So we prefer the term meiosis, which the dictionary defines as "a species of hyperbole, representing a thing as less than it is."

Its use, we say, is common. Some people never give an opinion without resorting to it. "How do you like that pudding, Jack?" "Not bad, aunt," says Jack, with his mouth full. Meiosis in such cases is generally avoided by polite society. Society would reply "Delicious. Do tell me where you got the recipe." But there are, of course, occasions when its use is diplomatically necessary, as in the well-known dilemma when Jobson asks you, "How do you like that sherry?" Here the case is complicated.

It is out of the question to say what you want to say, which is "Filthy stuff." But neither is it safe to say, "One of the finest sherries I ever tasted;" for in that case Jobson is sure to reply, "Well, I only gave 20 shillings for it, and I think its pretty good at that price"—in which case you know that "filthy stuff" was the right expression. No; the ordinary guest falls back upon the blessed meiosis, and says with an air of subdued criticism, "H'm, I wish I may never taste a worse glass of sherry than this," which is quite true, and is capable of expansion (according to the host's next remark) into the utmost admiration or contempt. This is the diplomatic use of the meiosis, and may be applied to all cases in which the proprietor asks your opinion of his dogs, horses, pictures, and property generally.

Meiosis is most invaluable in the other difficult social dilemma when one woman asks your opinion of another. We except, of course, the case of a mother asking the opinion of her daughters; good taste here counsels only one form of reply. But when at a ball or a theatre you are asked what you think of "that girl in blue over there," what are you to say? It may be the fair enquirer's dearest foe, or it may be her fondest friend. The old courtly school knew a way out of the difficulty. You were always safe when you were expected to say, "I vow, fair madam,



that for me there is but one beautiful woman in the assembly," or "I protest I might have thought her beautiful, had you, sweet mistress, not been by." This sort of thing is as safe as a house; but it is no good now. Meiosis is the only refuge for us. We say discreetly, "not bad figure—eh. Sort of girl that ought to dance well," or "Doesn't look a bad looking girl from here. Who is she?" Excellent "not bad." What should we do without it? And please observe the non-committal "ought to be able to," the qualifying "from here," and the "Who is she?" which gives an opportunity of diverting conversation from ticklish ground.

It must not, however, be imagined that the use of this excellent figure of speech is confined to the conversation of the "classes" any more than it is confined to the writings of the classics. Ask a cabman to have a drink—what does he say? "He don't mind if he do." Ask a bookmaker, after a meeting at which all the favourites have failed, what sort of a day he has had. He has had a "pretty tidy" day. Praise his cattle to a farmer. He assents, adding that they are a "niceish lot." This is not modesty; it is merely the way people have been accustomed to speak. They don't think like that. Find the cabman, the bookmaker, and farmer, drunk, and put to them the same questions; the cabman says promptly: "Right yer are, mister.

I'll take another of gin cold;" the bookmaker slaps his pocket, with a "Best day I've had this long time;" and the farmer is positive that "Better beasts you don't see in the whole county."

But there is also a form of meiosis, neither mock-modest nor courtly nor diplomatic, but simply terrible. When Mr. Squeers had finished his moral discourse upon the impropriety of leaving cold mutton fat, and, moistening the palms of his hands, said, "Come here" to one of his young friends, there was something grim in the bland meiosis of the invitation. Or to descend a step upon the social ladder, mark the soft persuasion of Mrs. Billy Ruffian as she says to her youngest boy, "I'll give yer what for." No grammarian has ever analysed this remarkable sentence, but young Master Ruffian understands it well. Akin to this is the cabby's "Ere wot's this ere? Eighteen-pence—all the way from Victory. Nice sort of gemman you are, I don't think." Now if either Mrs. Ruffian or the cabby had spoken out their minds freely they would probably have rendered themselves liable under the statute of George II. Meiosis has, therefore, its moral uses.

Our language is full of expressions formed by help of this figure of speech. "Not at home" is meiosis for "I will *not* see that odious woman;" "elevated" for a very low condition of human nature;

“not all there” for a lunatic at large; “thanks, but I am rather hoarse to-night,” for “these people are not worth singing to;” and so on. It is a still moot question whether Grand Old Man is the language of hyperbole or meiosis.

*“The Globe,” December 22, 1888*

## “MERRY XMAS TO YOU”

It is somewhat depressing to find that even Mr. Gladstone, now within a few days of seventy-nine experiences of Christmas, can find nothing better to say in response to a “Merry Christmas” greeting than an elegant periphrasis of “Ditto to you.” For the puzzle becomes yearly more puzzling—how to reply with anything approaching genuine grace to the friendly good wishes which are showered upon you at this season from every side.

Let us distinguish in the first place. The land is full of humbugs who wish us Merry Christmas in hopes of coppers or small silver. These gentry are best met with a gratuity, when deserved, or with that deafness which is probably that chief ground of the adder’s claim to subtlety. Dr. Holmes has, in-

deed, recommended in a similar instance that you should

“Go very quietly and drop  
A button in the hat;”

but the palm feels more easily than the hat which may be only felt, and the consequences of playing tricks upon a gentleman, who one moment is wishing you every Christmas happiness may the next moment bring you a very practical form of unhappiness. Even if no brutal assault is committed upon your person, you are liable to an attack of sarcasm such as the Killarney beggar delivered to the great American philanthropist. “They call ye Paybody,” said the patriot, with the scorn peculiar to disappointed mendicants, “but bedad! I call ye Pay-nobody.”

Many of our friends, however, have no particular object in offering us good wishes for Christmas beyond a feeling that the conventional phrases are expected from them. We should have fired off all the phrases first had they anticipated us. The question is how to reply. The ordinary mortal smiles with an affectation of sincerity, and says, “Thanks—and many of them to you,” or, “Same to you, old fellow,” or, “Aw, thanks: by the way, where are you going this Christmas?” with an easy attempt to change the subject. But even the most ordinary

mortal must become aware that familiarity has bred contempt towards this institution, and as the Christmas octave draws to an end he becomes shorter and more mechanical in his replies to Christmas greetings. No doubt in the infancy of the world Adam said "Good morning" to Eve with a sincerity and fulness unknown to these later days. He probably used the full phrase "I wish you a good morning." But about the time of Abraham, personal pronoun and article had disappeared: It was "Bid you good day." Then the verb went, when luxury and laziness came in with gold and peacocks; Solomon we may conjecture, only said, "Good morning to you" to the numerous ladies of his family. And, lastly, mankind settled down to the brief "Good morning," "Morning," or "Morn'n'."

So it has been, and will increasingly be, with Christmas greetings. From the old

"God bless you, merrie gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ our Saviour,  
Was born on Christmas Day."

to the modern banality, "With all the compliments of the season," we have passed through declining stages of genuine congratulation; and "How d'ye do" is not more mechanical than "Merry Christmas to you." If it were only confined to one day it would not so

much matter ; but, as with Christmas cards, subscriptions, annuals, boxes and presents, time is taken by the forelock and by the pigtail as well. A fortnight before Christmas, and a fortnight afterwards, the phrase is repeated over and over again. And when January is passing into February it is still coming in from the friends who didn't see you at Christmas, from the relatives who live at the Antipodes and "had almost forgotten it was Christmas with the thermometer at 90 degrees in the shade," from the people who flourish the proverb about "Better late than never," which simply means that they had forgotten all about your existence at Christmas.

And to one and all of these we are expected to make some reply. Now, from this social dilemma we believe the New Year was specially created. Perish the thoughtless one who uses up at one mouthful his Christmas and his New Year's blessings. For, if he is content to wish you happiness for Christmas, you can retort with a prayer for his happiness in the New Year. And observe that his reply is handsome ; it wishes 365 times as much blessing as his opening wish. You feel all the satisfaction of the man who receives from his wife a pair of slippers and receives in return a carriage and pair. It is wrong, of course, to look a gift-horse in the mouth, but one cannot help some sly comparison as to value even of benediction. Esau on

a celebrated occasion was quite ready to take a second-rate blessing in default of none at all; and the beggar-woman recognises a similar distinction, when she says "God bless your honour!" for a penny, and "May your honour live a thousand years!" for sixpence.

Still the New Year is not so large a phrase in general acceptation as it should rightly be. It ought to mean a whole year—or at least three months; it really is confined in popular idea to a single day—the French *Jour de l'An*. So again we find ourselves at fault for an ingenious and novel reply. Why cannot some inventive brain do for quiet folk what has been done for the English toper? His form of salutation is fourfold in point and counterpoint:—

"I looks to you."

"I 'as your eye."

"You does me proud."

"I likewise bows."

This genial interchange of politeness has all the dignity of the old minuet; we only wonder that some Sir Arthur Sullivan has not married it to quaint music. It is as far removed from the brutal "'Ere's luck" as the modern "Morning" is from the ancient, "Bid you Good morrow, faire ladye." If some one will only do as much for us in the matter of "Merry Christmas to you!" we should be infinitely obliged to him.

"The Globe," January 14, 1888

## OF SLEEP

BY MASTER FRANCIS BROWN, CLERK

SLEEP hath three parts—the falling off, the slumber, and the awakening.

The falling off, likewise, hath two parts, the one arguing in what manner and by what means a man may fall upon sleep; the second, in what posture. Now, briefly, under the second head we may resume the diverse disagreements of the medicos, who have sorely wrangled thereon—as to wit. The Doctor Serafino sayeth that the head should be higher than the feet, being of those that hold that anæmia of the cerebrum is the cause of slumber, or—to state the matter more justly—that, at the least, a necessary condition of that state must be a quantitative diminution of blood in the vessels of the encephalon. *Per contra* the Doctor Chembino protesteth that passive congestion doth cause or doth tend to somnolence; wherefore he would have the heels laid higher than the head. With which statement of opinion we may profitably abandon the learned doctors' disagreements, seeing that no man that comes of woman was ever yet known to reconcile their differences.



But of the manner and means of passing from life to that state which the poets have by conceit imagined to be twin-brother of death yet more diverse opinions are entertained. There be those that accomplish this end by corporeal fatigue, as do runners, boxers, players at ball, and such like. There be others that of mere head-weariness and inordinate exercise of the brain force themselves, as it were, into a lethargy of the animal being. Others, by strong drink or infusion of potent herbs, have induced a crapulous somnolence, which is but a vicious form of slumber, and taketh away perchance more than it doth bestow. Now, all these extremes, "*non per naturam, sed contra naturam, fiunt,*" as the learned Hookeius Gualkerius hath it, and are not to be commended by the prudent, slumber being but the complementary part of nature's active existence, the testimony of its infirmity, the sign-manual of the severance of the human copy from the divine exemplar. Not but that Homer hath not presented the gods to us as taking slumber after the fashion of mortal men; but in this he doth manifestly err, and in so far doth fall short of the truer teaching of Holy writ, for the which *vide* Psalm cxxi. 4. It is evident, then, that sleep is a natural process, not to be studiously courted, nor obstinately declined.

Wherefore they be wrong that in jesting do point out the sleeper and say, "Lo: he is nodding," or "See

—again he is dropping off,” with other phrases of light-mindedness. Nor are they to be praised who do wantonly proffer wagers of gloves, silken or leathern, upon the adventure of embracing one who is in slumber, the which prank, unseemly though it be, hath before now been played by lewd fellows or by wanton maidens upon sleepers of the contrary sex. For slumber is a solemn thing and a serious, whereof evidence may be had in the various notable prodigies that have happened unto men in their dreams and visitations while asleep. It is, again, but a sorry jest to bandy railing proverbs against him that sleepeth long time, as, for example, that saying that doth fix and limit the hours of slumber in this wise—“six hours for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool”—seeing that many a man may sleep eight hours by the dial, and awake not less wise than the railer. In sum, sleep is of Nature’s gift, and hath in it something divine, solemn, and not to be lightly trifled with.

Now, of slumber itself there be three kinds—the light (or uneasy), the sound, and the heavy (or stertorous). Your light sleeper tosseth to and fro, and anon muttereth to himself; he flingeth the bed linen to floor, and awakening crieth, “I am cold.” Your heavy sleeper, on the other hand, lieth like a beast, and at times will utter strange gruntings and snorings by the nose; from which some have argued against the

Divine nature of sleep. But to such fat-headed reasonings we have this only answer to give: Who judgeth of mankind by the light wanton of the play-house, and the blustering braggadocio of the highway? Who taketh conception of a hound from the ragged purblind puppy and the o'er nurtured swollen "Fanciullo"? If you would see sleep in its true semblance, go to the bedside of the sound sleeper who doth hold the mean between the two other extremes of slumber. He lieth evenly in his couch; his breath cometh and goeth in steady currents; his clothes are gathered about him so that you shall not see so much as a wrinkle of disorder; his colour is constant; perchance he whispereth a name; he smileth; he is visited with pleasant visions; there is no man happier upon the earth nor more unwitting of his own happiness.

To such an one his awakening—for that was promised as the third head of this discourse—cometh not as a surprise nor as a thing disagreeable and painful. He riseth from his bed, as he went to it, with satisfaction, and washeth himself without sourfacedness. For him is the beauty of the morning, the sudden pleasure of the sunrise, the open greeting of his familiars, the thankful breaking of the early bread. He doth not repine that he hath been roused betimes; he doth not frown at his mails and news sheet; he doth not chide the hand-maid for matters not worth the chiding of a

Christian man. With the others it is not so. They are even as the thistle down upon the morning lawn which, as the sun riseth, is blown hither and thither upon every air. One ventureth that he hath been awakened too early or too late—with such it is all one; another that his fare lacks savour; another upbraided his spouse; a fourth will chastise the children. So each goeth forth unto his work and labour, sore and unrefreshed, and forgetful that his evil sleep hath haply not come save from the evil manner of his habit of life, rails upon nature, having missed the best gift which she had to bestow. For surely of all the good gifts of nature to man, the best, the most Divine, the most salutary, is an easy slumber.

*"The Globe," December 31, 1888-1889*

## THE OLD YEAR

ONE, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Finis. Thus the great writer of history completes one more work in twelve volumes—thirty chapters or so to the volume—and quietly takes up a new pen, not for the composition of an effective title page, not for the flourishes of an epistle dedicatory

or an elegant preface, but for the bold matter-of-fact "Vol. I. chap. I." of the new history.

Already we fancy the famous work called for at all the libraries, and advertised in all the papers; discussion goes briskly round—"Is it better than the others?" "Any signs of falling off, eh?" "Tragedy or comedy this time?" "Mixed, I suppose, as usual?" Nothing will prevent the world buzzing in this way about the completed work. It is one of the things which people always discuss, just as they discuss Henry Irving, the last piece at the Savoy, the inconvenience of fog, and where they are going this winter. They have been discussed a hundred times, and most people always say the same things about them. But it is generally felt that it is the natural and proper thing to do. So it is done, and we all discuss just now the old year.

There are those who have solemn reasons for remembering it. For them the twelve volumes of its chronicles are condensed to one—nay, even to one chapter, to the events of a single day. On that day they loved, they married, they lost, they won—in some way the current of their life took a new direction, and for them the whole year is concentrated in that single day. This comes to all of us at times; but as a rule it is not so. The majority, at least, every 31st of December look back at the old year with a vaguely uncertain feeling as to what did or what did not happen

in it; for them, half the events of '89 might be tumbled into '88, and they would be none the wiser. They look at the year's obituary and they are frankly surprised; they thought half of those who figure in the list had been dead "years ago." When did Lord Durdans make his speech at the Billycock Club—was it this, or last year? Was it only last March that Tomnoddy ran off with Gules-Argent's wife? Why it seems eighteen months at least. Of such fleeting memories is our survey of events composed, and so quickly does the diminishing power of distance begin to affect all that is not included in the foreground of our general purview.

And apart from the individual judgment there is to large bodies of mankind a notable, as distinct from what Poe calls an "immemorial" year. What '74 is to champagnes, that, for instance, is '85 to politicians. The Revolutionists have their '89, as Loyalists have their '45. The "Annus Mirabilis" repeats itself so constantly that we are more inclined to wonder at a year which brings us no cause for wonder. But surely on the whole a year without colour is this year just passing away. It has been marked by no earthquakes in the social or political or economic worlds. It has witnessed no Reign of Terror, no Midlothian Campaign, no Black Monday. It has gone through its quiet round of events, variegated, but not stamped for all eternity, by a Prince Rudolph tragedy, a Pigott fiasco, a dockers'

strike, a Paris Exhibition. The vintage of 1889 will scarcely be famous in the cellars of history.

The public, then, at large is left free to devote itself to the usual sentiments which recur at this time of the year—to regrets, explanations, resolutions, and promises. A. can analyse the cause which led to the abandonment of his projected life of teetotalism. B. can mourn over the vanities which he did not, as he promised himself, “put down.” Miss C. can explain why her diary begun on January 1, 1889, is still in a fragmentary condition; and D. will perhaps be able to give good reasons why the account part of his new “Diary for 1889” got into a hopeless state of muddle by the middle of February. From this point of view—still the individual—the unwritten history of the year becomes more interesting than the written. The “magna opera” which were never published, the projects which were never pursued, the reforms which were never persisted in, are looked back upon through that blessed mist of short memory which, shrouding the events of a world, blurr also the shortcomings of a worldling. It is a favourite subject for the moralist to reflect upon good intentions unfulfilled; but the average man is quite content after a little while to consign his good intentions to a place where they are said to make very good pavement.

A more important reflection, perhaps, than what we

might have become is what we have become. We are told that every particle of our natural body is replaced every seven years; and the statement is probably as true of our intellectual and moral natures. In these cases there is, of course, a great element of uncertainty, sufficient to disturb any exact conclusions. The two forces, which we may vaguely term individuality and environment, must obviously be taken into serious consideration. An idiot who had continued to float about the Great American lakes in the barrel in which he had shot the whirl-pool Rapids of Niagara seven years before, would obviously step out of his barrel pretty nearly as great an idiot as he stepped into it. But as a rule every year contributes a tolerably constant fraction towards the entire change of a man's moral nature and towards his intellectual growth. From this point of view the only question to be asked at the end of the old year is the question of "Upward or downward?" "Forward or backward?" This change is responsible for what is called a changed point of view, and the extent of the change would sometimes almost paralyse a man, if he could really grasp it in its fulness. It is the explanation of many seeming contradictions, and the shield by which many a charge of "inconsistency" can fairly be warded off. But the inconsistency really appears when the individual, now of a new moral and intellectual stature, wishes to pose as the individual of



years ago—to get, in fact, the advantage, of both mental and moral attitudes. But the world is very quick to perceive that the buck of seventy is not at all the same thing as the dandy of seventeen.

On the whole, a great deal of false sentiment has been wasted upon the passage of the old year to the new. It is nothing more than a conventional crisis of history. Every man can make, and does make, such crisis for himself; or rather they come to him without any effort on his part. A speech, an accident, a book, a meeting, is the turning point of a life; and that critical moment may come upon a day which is neither the shortest nor the longest, neither the first nor the last of any year.

## “TRILBY”: AN OPEN LETTER

*Sans rancune*, Mr. Punch, I observe that your family is going out into the world. Can it be that your long—must I say, tedious?—*liaison* with *la veuve* Ramsbotham has so flouted all the malaproprieties that the young people have begun to take dangerous notice? Even the ever-youthful Du Maurier, the ever-faithful, the Master of the One Immutable Type of Feminine

Beauty and Purity, has gone a-flirting on his own account in the Quartier Latin with a *blanchisseuse de fin*, and has published his reminiscences of *la belle Trilby*.

Amazing! *mes compliments!*

The impudence and indecency of republishing in more or less permanent book form letters written to newspapers, private correspondence, magazine articles, and stories, and such-like imbecilities, are beyond necessity of proof. I have done it myself: I know. But even in impudence and indecency there should be honesty. The republication of this magazine story is dishonest. I note—O! the shame of it—alterations, additions, omissions. The alterations and additions, as evidencing a creditable desire on the part of a scarcely fledged author to improve his chirrup, I might have forgiven; but not the omissions—not the One Unpardonable Omission. This republication has omitted ME.

It has also omitted Mr. Du Maurier's own drawings. *Pour cela, passe; encore une fois, mes compliments!* But, I repeat, this republican has omitted ME.

Of the "scribe" of "Trilby"\*—he calls himself thus ten times in his story—"the present scribe" desires to speak in all gentle sympathy; of his work, with that hush which comes at the prospect of imminent pop-

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\* "The first edition of Trilby contained a character supposed to represent the artist Whistler, who immediately attacked Du Maurier in a series of characteristic letters which caused much amazement at the time and led to the above parody."

ularity. The plains of popularity are bestrewn with skeletons of the men of many editions; of the much-engraved and photo-processed ones; of the monkey-minstrels of the hurdy-gurdies. There lie the multi-voluminous forms of the Rev. E. P. Roe, Maria Edgeworth, and G. P. R. James; there are Marcus Stone, maker or maker-up of eternal *amantium iræ*, and Frith, the heaven-born auctioneer, save for that fatal toss-up which made an artist of him; there are Tosti the tinkling and Ivan Caryll, *né* Tilkins; there are Nahum Tate and Pye, poets-laureate, and Lewis Morris, candidate for their shoes; Quilter the 'Arry, and Hamerton the 'Arriet, of art criticism; with countless other mediocrities. Upon these we look pitifully down from the everlasting hills—Beethoven, Velasquez, and I.

Pause, my dear Du Maurier, ere for this poor popularity you desert your rightful pre-eminence as the Corney Grain of Art. Be warned by the example of Oscar, who having published a century of paradoxes—the wit of many and the wisdom of one—has married, cut his hair, and retired to the decent impropriety of the footlights. How much better is unpopularity! I also, *moi qui vous parle*, am unpopular.

But let me return to the Great Omission. In the fascinating numbers of "Trilby," as they appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, I read with delight of one Joe

Sibley, idle apprentice, king of Bohemia, *roi des truands*, always in debt, vain, witty, exquisite and original in art, eccentric in dress, genial, caressing, scrupulously clean, sympathetic, charming; an irresistible but unreliable friend, a jester of infinite humour, a man now perched upon a pinnacle of fame (and notoriety), a worshipper of himself; a white-haired, tall, slim, graceful person with pretty manners and an unimpeachable moral tone. My only regret was that too little was said about so charming a creation. I looked to see more of him in the published three volumes. But no! I found the addition of some thoughtful excursions by Mr. Du Maurier upon nudity, agnosticism, and other more hazardous subjects, which had, presumably, been judged too strong for the ice-watered, ice-creamed constitution of the American Philistine; but I looked in vain for the delightful Joseph Sibley. In his place I find a yellow-haired Switzer, one Antony, son of a respectable burgher of Lausanne, who is now tall, stout, strikingly handsome and rather bald, but who in his youth had all the characteristics of the lost Joseph Sibley—his idleness, his debts, his humour, his art, his eccentricity, his charm. I rubbed my eye-glass. *Je me suis demandé pourquoi.*

The answer came to me in a vision of myself. It was I, Ich, Io, Yo, Ego—I in all the languages of whose alphabet Mr. Du Maurier holds the secret—who was the sympathetic, charming, irresistible, unreliable,

idle, sarcastic, clean, graceful, famous-notorious worshipper of Himself and art: but I also, the terrible, the contentious, the launcher of elaborate epigrams, the twopenny cane-wielder, the turbulent libel-auctioneer, the scalp-hunter—I, as some trumpery outsider, I think Oscar, has called me, the rowdy and unpleasant.

Lika Joko, I am not rowdy, I am not unpleasant, but I can recall with exhilaration that I am delicately contentious. I am an arrangement of porpoise-hide and sensitive plant, a harmony of the dry gelatine and the nickel-steel plate. Call me a sweep, if you will; but disarrange my harmonies of soot and I write to the papers at once. Therefore I can smile at the disappearance of Mr. Joseph Sibley: *je m'empresse de faire la connaissance de M. Antoine, bourgeois, de Lausanne*. I am content. *Je tiens*, I hold, the Anglo-French scalp of you, Mr. (or Monsieur) Du Maurier.

For the rest I pardon you. I can smile now at the phrase in which—with some vanity I thought at first—you called yourself “a meek and somewhat innocent outsider.” Your highest ambition in literature (I gather from your own chaste words) was to have “never penned a line which a pure-minded young British mother might not read aloud to her little blue-eyed babe as it lies sucking its little bottle in its little bassinet.” These are noble words; but, as you add, Fate (or your wicked self) has willed it otherwise. Joe

Sibley—and Antony of Lausanne, I trust—was a man of unimpeachable moral tone, and he could not commend to British mothers or blue-eyed babies those hazardous excursions of yours to which I have already with reluctance (but with infinite zest) alluded.

The critics, I see, have congratulated you upon your Thackerayan manner. "*Un écho, un simulacre, quoi! pas autre chose.*" It is unnecessary for me to bid you beware of critics. But I admit that you have the tenderness adulterated with the discursiveness of the Master. And you have some right worthy traditions of the lady novelist. You adore Ellen Terry; you misquote Calverley; you send your hero travelling "with *Punch* and other literature of a lighter character." *J'espère!*

But I forgive you these things. I forgive you even the metamorphosis of Joe Sibley, for your other worthier gifts—"les trois Angliches," the Laird, Taffy, and Little Billee, "Soldiers Three" of the Quartier Latin of days gone by; above all, for the adorable Trilby. After this it matters little whether you discovered Oscar or whether Oscar discovered you, or which was the more valuable discovery. For all old fellows of Bohemia you have rediscovered the old cult—the cult of Trilbyism.

*Mes compliments, cher maître!* In the lowliness of

miserable popularity you shall be cheered and sustained  
by the lofty, disdainful encouragement of

THE GRUB THAT MAKES THE

Paris: 10 P. M.



REFLECTION:

Perhaps I  
have let him  
down too eas-  
ily. But, *que*  
*voulez - vous?*  
there is good  
in the fellow  
after all. He  
has admitted  
that I am a  
“scrupulously  
clean”—hitter.







POEMS



## TO MY RED AND BLUE PENCIL

Small relic of my nights of toil,  
Dear common pencil, thou hast seen  
The flickering light of midnight oil  
Gleam, when no other light had been.  
Sad life was thine: for thou wast fated  
To mark the passages I hated.

Sore life was thine; thy life blood marked  
"Hard places" that I led thee through:  
Or on a sea of notes embarked,  
Thou added'st colour to the blue.  
Didst e'er give way? My cruel knife  
Cut short and so prolonged thy life.

Each "knotty point" was plain to thee,  
At each "crux" crucified anew;  
Each "favourite piece" no peace for thee;  
Each "spat" called forth thy red and blue:  
Till thou at length grown short, my friend,  
"Of many books" didst find "an end."

My rule of life, "read, mark and learn";  
Thy rule of life, "mark red and blue";  
What arbiter shall e'er discern  
Which were the harder task to do?  
Alas! the blue must be *read* through  
And I be *ready* with the blue.

Farewell, sweet pencil; at the last  
A First to me thy toils did give  
Immortal one! Thy labours past,  
Ever, a votive offering, live.  
No Atropas, no Fate's stern daughter  
Shall cut thy red and blue life shorter.

## TO MAY

May, thou hast been with us four weeks or so,  
Four weeks of heat or hail or rain or blow,  
With fits of fog and frost and sleet and snow—  
Now go.

May, once beloved of Flora, gentle May,  
Tender with greenness and with blossom gay,  
Where hast thou wandered, whither stolen away  
To-day?

May, we have hated thee, and feared thee so,  
Thee whom it was our pleasure once to know,  
Farewell were mockery: not good-bye—no, no—  
Just go.

1890

Why should we spoil our decade new by toasting 1890  
In that unutterable slosh called tea, however fine tea?  
No, no! for me the bottle still, the quarty or the pinty,  
The red or white, to drink till night the health of 1890!

*St. Augustine, Fla.*

*Feb. 16, 1893*

Algy, my love, I am about to take a  
Voyage by sea to Nassau and Jamaica.  
We start to-morrow in a haste disgustin'.  
So here's a brief account of St. Augustine.  
The rest is silence now, until again in  
Floridian climes I find the rest of Canaan.  
Then once again I will become your penman  
And sketch the darkie gal and coloured gen'man.  
Farewell. I go to feed the ocean fishes.  
Neptune be damned—if this my dying wish is.

P. S.—I also send herewith a T. O.  
Written by P. O. and dispatched by P. O.

## A LENTEN CONFESSION

Mrs. Adderley tells me I told her I find  
That the female department is somewhat behind  
Of the masculine ditto in matter of mind.

For she said that I said that the feminine kind  
Was a trifle restricted,—a trifle confined,  
Was, in short (—to be short,—), somewhat short  
of a mind.

Did I say so? I might have. I think I had dined  
And a purée or entrée may frequently blind  
The good judgment of even the male of mankind.

But swift punishment followed, as swift as the wind,  
An avenger was found for the rest of her kind,  
And *dessert* was served out to the wretch who  
had dined.

For the Countess soon gave me a piece of her mind,  
Which, “per specimen sample submitted,” I find  
And “I certify hereby” was far from “confined.”

Sealed, delivered and signed  
for repentant mankind  
by the blind, but resigned,  
Mr. Ponsonby Ogle, “the wretch who had dined,”  
To the opposite sex,—to the sex with a mind.

## A WONDERFUL COUNTRY

Land of stupendous portents!  
Land of large fruits and flowers!  
There through the dreary autumn months  
We spend fantastic hours.

Most wonderful of regions,  
Beloved of every journal,  
Whence labouring scribblers glean the straw  
To make their bricks diurnal.

For there the heavens are dancing  
In meteoric capers,  
With shooting stars, all chronicled  
In all the morning papers.

From boiling point to zero  
The temperature goes ranging,  
And in the *Times* "Thermometer"  
Records the daily changing.

There *rara aves* furnish  
"White Selborne's" correspondence,  
And holidays evoke the depths  
Of fatherly despondence.

There before staring sailors  
The great sea serpents wallow ;  
There grow vast gooseberries that defy  
The greediest schoolboy's swallow.

There every stirring tale of  
Escape or escapade is  
Told, for the sympathy of males,  
By palpitating ladies.

There evening's "WAR *expected*"  
Changes to "PEACE" next morning;  
There natural convulsions come  
Without a note of warning.

\* \* \* \* \*

On these and such like wonders  
The public buzz, like bees on  
The lime-tree blossoms, in that strange  
Land of the silly season.

## A CATCH \*

BY C. S. P.

If this is what my "s" is,  
If that is like my "a"  
I'm—well, I hate all entry  
Of words un-Parliament'ry—  
But I must say that "bless" is  
Not just what I would say,  
If this is what my "s" is,  
And that is like my "a."

\* Mr. Parnell's letter requires no introduction to the English public.



If this is like my "very,"  
And that like my "yours,"  
Truth is a taradiddle,  
The outside is the middle,  
The mournful is the merry,  
And indoors is outdoors,  
If this is like my "very,"  
And that is like my "yours."

If this is like my "Chas. S.,"  
And that like my "Parnell,"  
I yield my known position  
As blameless politician;  
For all men not born asses  
Or idiots, know full well,  
This is not like my "Chas. S.,"  
And that's not my "Parnell."

So, spite the bolts of Buckle  
And thunder of the "Times."  
A day will come—a season  
When I stand cleared of treason  
To all that sneer and chuckle,  
To all that hint of crimes,  
Despite the bolts of Buckle  
And thunder of the "Times."

## EX-LUCY

"From the day I first sat in the Editor's chair I have hankered after my box in the House of Commons, and now I am going back to it; that is all."—H. W. LUCY.

So! good bye to a year or so's fancies,  
Dreams of conquest and glory galore,  
Dreams of leading the Liberal lances,  
Dreams of battle and slaughter and gore.  
They are gone—they will come now no more;  
They are passed with the nightmares of Nox;  
The new broom sweeps the editor's floor;  
And I shut myself up in my "box."

All the fictions and fervid romances  
Which I drew from my phantasy's store,  
All the tripping poetical dances  
Which I danced to *his* pipings—are o'er.  
For the old Irish pig is a bore;  
And the ram that was lord of the flocks  
Has been stripped of the wool which he wore.  
So I mournfully turn to my "box."

Like blind Samson, now shorn of my locks,  
I shall grind on the Philistines' floor;  
I shall pass from the editor's door  
To my old Parliamentary "box."

## TO INDIGESTION

Hence! Hence! unbidden guest,  
Thou that in hours of rest  
Broodest beneath the breast  
    After deep eating;  
Thou that 'twixt heat and cold  
Tossest the feaster bold,  
All on the carpet rolled,  
    Nightshirt with sheeting.

Thou dost not come to fright  
Bad Earl or wicked Knight,  
As do those phantoms white  
    Of faery land's myth;  
No, but thou comest down  
Unto the lowliest clown,  
Unto such men as Brown,  
    Robinson and Smith.

After the happy hum  
Round the mince pies and plum-  
Pudding, thy torturing numb,  
    Fiend, most intense is,  
Then in his midnight bed  
Brown finds (as Virgil said)  
Feet, hands, legs, arms like lead,  
    Lead like the senses.

Then, too, sharp searching pain  
Midway 'twixt toes and brain  
Stabs Smith again, again,  
    Backwards and forwards;  
Then, too, with angry sound  
Robinson kicks around,  
Till all his bed clothes bound  
    Helplessly floor-ward.

So, as in Babel's hall  
Dumbly those feasters all  
Stared at, upon the wall  
    Four words tremendous,  
Robinson, Smith, Brown, blue,  
Vision of handscrawl view—  
These two words, only two,  
    *Haustus sumendus.*

## TO TETOTALA

WITH APOLOGIES TO BEN JONSON

Drink to me only with thine eyes  
    But I will drink with wine;  
Pour lemon squash within thy cup,  
    But alcohol in mine.  
The thirst that in my throat doth rise  
    Demands a drink divine.  
And, though thou Zoedone may'st sup,  
    It is not in my line.

I sent thee late some rosy port,  
Not so much meant for thee  
As giving me a hope next night  
Thy drink might decent be.  
But thou at it didst only snort,  
And sent'st it back, sweet T.,  
Since when it has been drunk at sight  
Not by thyself, but me.

## THE ALDERMAN'S FAREWELL

"For the time being there is a turtle famine."—*City Press*.

KALIPASH, can this thing be—  
Has there come an end to thee?  
Wilt thou never more be seen,  
KALIPEE in fat tureen?  
Farewell happiness for me!  
KALIPASH, KAI KALIPEE.

By the flavour of the punch  
We have guzzled down at lunch;  
By thick turtle and by thin;  
By the savoury turtle fin;  
Tell me, can such horrors be,  
KALIPASH, KAI KALIPEE?

Tip us, then, your flippers, give  
One more feast while yet ye live.  
Once more let us gobble in  
Turtle thick and turtle thin.  
Dying we will drink to ye,  
KALIPASH, KAI KALIPEE.

## MY TROUSERS

Good-bye, my Sunday trousers ;  
Henceforth no more ye may  
Flaunt to the morning service,  
Or gild the wedding day ;  
No more go out a calling,  
No more be stretched at ease  
In hearing of small scandal  
Where ladies sip their teas.

Henceforth, my week-day trousers,  
Such merriment be yours  
As mine is at the office,  
From weary tens to fours ;  
And when the short days shorten  
And blobs of mud begin,  
Yours be the noble duty  
To ward them from my shin.

My friends, my twin-leg armour,  
    Be reasonable and sweet;  
Long have I watched you proudly  
    Sweep downward to my feet.  
But lately I must mention  
    I've noticed, ill at ease,  
You certainly have tended  
    To bagginess at knees.

You'll make some new acquaintance  
    I think you have not met;  
The hat I bought last winter  
    And always use for wet.  
And there is too, a jacket  
    I think you've not yet seen,  
About the elbows shiny  
    And generally green.

Then, you'll meet other trousers  
    That you may like to know;  
Some from expensive tailors  
    And ONE from Savile-row.  
But if you hang down stiffly,  
    And do not play the fool,  
They may, perhaps, imagine  
    That you were cut by Poole.

There are who would have sold you  
To Solomon or Mo.';  
There are who might have tossed you  
To Thomas or to Joe;  
But Thomas is too stylish,  
Too mean is Moses; so  
Let's, leg in leg, together  
A little longer go.

## SALE OR EXCHANGE

A CREED FOR YOUNG MEN .

"I am not sure of it. A Positivist says he does not know.  
I do not know. I leave it."

I do believe that one belief  
Is good as any other:  
And any murderer or thief  
Is—in a sense—my brother.  
Those who believe in right to thieve  
Should have their fling;  
And murderers I would reprieve  
If I were King.  
I do believe I don't believe  
In anything.



Voodoo fanatics I have met  
Without repulsive shudder ;  
And I believe in Mahomet,  
And somewhat, too, in Buddha.  
On prayer-book I would take an oath  
Most willingly ;  
Or kiss the Pope's toe, nothing loth,  
On bended knee.  
My creed assures me they are both  
Fiddle-de-dee.

I hold a fort within my breast  
That needs no other garrison  
Than a belief in Comte the blest  
And the to-be-blest Harrison.  
For I abhor a positive  
Or Yes or No ;  
And live quite ready to receive  
All creeds below.  
All my belief is I believe  
I nothing know.

## CIGARETTE

O pale cigarette, with those fragrant,  
Those lazy light curls from the East;  
Never puffed by the ragged and vagrant,  
Never puffed by the public-house beast;  
O twirled in red lips and lithe fingers  
Of Félise, Yolande, or Juliette,  
What glamour about thee still lingers,  
O pale cigarette!

Though the anti-tobacconist's warning  
Should couple thy name with the pipe,  
Thou wilt share the aristocrat's scorning  
Which the *riz-de-veau* feels for the tripe.  
As the "class" to the "mass" of tobacco  
So thou hast been, so shalt thou be yet,  
In despite this dull season's attack, O  
Thou pale cigarette.

There is poison, they say, in thy kisses;  
There is death for the lungs that inhale,  
And the cheeks of young masters and misses  
Have turned, as they puffed at thee, pale.  
But, though locks may be whitening and thinning,  
One joy man will never forget,  
Thy first whiff, his disastrous beginning,  
O pale cigarette.

## WANTED—A PHOTOGRAPH

There's my photo-frame, embroidered  
With three words from "glorious Will!"  
Many a year has seen it empty;  
Many a year may find it still  
Empty:—For I never knew  
One that was "fair, wise and true."

Lelia *fair* is: from her beauty  
Nymphs turn enviously away.  
Brighter hair no sunlight shines on;  
Sweeter eyes ne'er smiled to-day.  
Lovelier grace is found in few,  
But—but—is she wise and true?

Delia *wise* is: of her wisdom  
Jealous Pallas witnesseth.  
Muses nine her birth attended,  
And will close her eyes in death.  
She is most celestial blue!  
But—but—is she fair and true?

Celia *true* is: vestal virgins  
Have not soul than her's more pure,  
And her truth is of that whiteness  
That shall evermore endure.  
Yet—clear gem of heavenly dew!  
Is she wise and fair as true?

Lelia, Delia, Celia! tell me,  
Where within this world may be  
One—one only—that uniteth  
All perfection's Trinity!  
Venus, Pallas, Vesta! do  
Show me one, "*fair, wise and true!*"

## POET AND POETASTERS

The great man died. The little poet men,  
They took their paper, blotting pads and ink,  
Sharpened their goose-plucked plumes, and wept and  
then  
Sat to their desks and last began to think;  
(And one there was that also called for drink,  
And deep and often drained the flagon red)  
Till the smooth stanzas flowed with a tink-a-tink,  
And the full moon smiled in from over head  
On little poet men who sang the great man dead.

## “THE WAY THRO’ THE WOOD”

Still is the way, for the air is keeping  
Soft, silent watch, as for some new comer ;  
The fern droops, drowsing, the moss lies sleeping,  
Dreaming the dreams of the last past summer.  
And the birds are but waiting to wake and sing  
The sweet approach of the virgin Spring ;  
When, like angel blessing, as pure, as good,  
She takes her way by “the way through the wood.”

Still is the wood, for no dryads, peeping,  
Flirt to the fauns, with coquetting faces ;  
The tiny brooklet is stealing, creeping,  
From hiding-places to hiding-places.  
And the hazel and birch are but waiting to fling  
The first-born leaflets to greet the Spring ;  
When, with soft-green kirtle, and soft-green hood,  
She takes her way by “the way through the wood.”

Still is the ground, till her footfall awaken  
The sound of the growing of grass and flowers ;  
Still is the wind, till the airs be shaken,  
As with dancing zephyrs and sunlight showers.  
And the woodland stairway is cold and grey,  
Till the virgin Spring shall descend that way ;  
Till she stand in her beauty where last she stood,  
When she sighed farewell to “the way thro’ the  
wood.”

## PRIMROSE DAY—1888

Kennst Du das alte Märchen?

Knowest thou the old, old story? A gay, a gallant  
knight  
That loved a village maiden and rode into the fight.  
And she, poor maiden, loved him, and bound upon his  
crest  
The primrose of her village—the flower he loved the  
best.

He took the favour from her, he kissed the giver's  
hand;  
There was no stately lady who was happier in the land.  
There was no prouder champion rode forth to win or  
die,  
To triumph or to perish beneath his lady's eye.

Stern was the fight, and fiercely fierce foemen drew  
their breath;  
Sword clashed with sword and target, death followed  
hard on death.  
And still through surging battle through all the clang-  
ing hours,  
High above dead and dying he bore the primrose  
flowers.

But towards the dying evening, when victors spurred  
for home,  
There passed one dark horse, riderless, flecked with  
grey dust and foam.  
And in the hosts of corpses, there, on the battle's plain,  
The primrose knight lay fallen, stained with his life-  
blood's stain.

\* \* \* \* \*

The silent moon had risen: the stars shone overhead;  
She came—the village maiden—to seek among the  
dead.  
And there, with tearless passion, found in that pause  
of fight  
The dying primrose cluster, that crowned her fallen  
knight.

With living flowers she crowned him, the faithful and  
the brave;  
So for the last time kissed him and laid him in the  
grave,  
And with her own hands planted, with prayers of fond-  
est breath,  
The primrose of her village, the flower he bore to death.

There, ever in the springtime, through sunlight and  
through showers,  
The country comes to mourn him and deck his grave  
with flowers ;  
Not with proud flowers of brilliance about his place of  
rest,  
But with pale primrose blossoms, the flowers he loved  
the best.

## ARIA

Take these flowers, keep and love them,  
Corydon.  
For the evening glowed above them,  
And the wan,  
New-born stars stooped down and kissed them,  
Nestling on  
Stream-fed meads, that loved and missed them  
Sore, when gone.

Then they turned to *other* flowers,  
Corydon ;  
Filled *their* petals with dew-showers ;  
Breathed upon  
Other flowers with fragrance tender,  
That anon  
Radiant in day's dying splendors  
Star-like shone.



But when morn awoke those true loves,  
Corydon,  
Vanished were their new, their few loves;  
—All were gone!  
For the fairest gems of even,  
Oft by morning steal to heaven,  
Corydon.

## THE CHRISTMAS FOLK

The men that meet at Christmas  
Be merrie Christian men—  
They greet with cheery chaffing,  
Shake sides with genial laughing,  
And pledge with hearty quaffing,  
And cheer with ten times ten:  
For the men that meet at Christmas  
Be merrie Christian men.

The folk that feast at Christmas  
Be festive Christian folk—  
With gaiety untiring,  
About the faggot's firing,  
They, to their heart's desiring,  
Crack bottle and crack joke:  
For the folk that feast at Christmas  
Be festive Christian folk.

The boys that come at Christmas  
Be noisie Christian boys—  
They make strange apple-pies in  
The bed their grand-dad lies in,  
And battle loud for prize in  
A tournament of noise:  
For the boys that come at Christmas  
Be noisie Christian boys.

The girls that flirt at Christmas  
Be prettie Christian girls—  
They buy the boys' delayment  
Paying with kisses payment,  
And float their fairy raiment,  
And toss their teasing curls:  
For the girls that flirt at Christmas  
Be prettie Christian girls.

The sires that crone at Christmas  
Be sober Christian sires—  
Full many a head that hoar is  
Bewails departed glories,  
And tells fine crusted stories  
Round hospitable fires:  
For the sires that crone at Christmas  
Be sober Christian sires.

The wives that chat at Christmas  
Be kindlie Christian wives—  
They broider fair narrations  
Stitch crewel-work creations,  
And pick at reputations,  
And canvass neighbours' lives :  
For the wives that chat at Christmas  
Be kindlie Christian wives.

And all that joy at Christmas  
Be jollie Christians all—  
With glass and silver shining,  
And jollie young folk dining,  
And jollie old folk wining,  
And laughter through the hall :  
For the folk that joy at Christmas  
Be jollie Christians all.





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